The Valley Patriot

"Congress shall make no law..."

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20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION!

March, 2024
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Edition #245

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Salisbury Slander!

Salisbury Planning Board Director Lisa Pearson told Town Officials Ron Tony Giordano was a registered sex offender to keep him from being appointed to the town Planning Board. Now Giordano is suing Pearson and the Town.

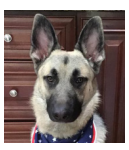
INDEX

Rep. Reyes PAGE 7

Vets....1
Editorial....2
State....2,4,5,7,8
Haverhill....4,6
Lawrence....4,6-8,11,15, 16
Methuen....4-8
North Andover....5
Dracut....8,16
Pets/Lowell....13
National....13,18
NOTEBOOK....20
New Hampshire....21, 26
Religion....23,27
Health....23
Real Estate....24

Beneath The Surface Paul Murano PAGE 23

Auditor DiZoglio In Your Corner PAGE 5



Kane PAGE 13

Bill Cushing TV TALK PAGE 27

Valley Patriot of the Month

Korean War Veteran; Lawrence's Tom Finn

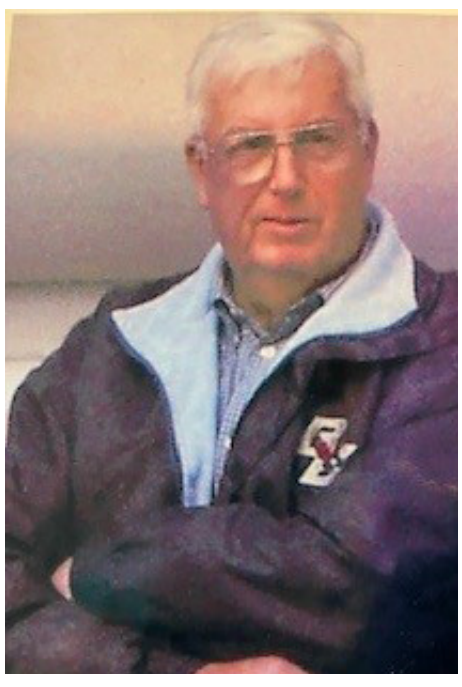
Pat Driscoll
GUEST COLUMNIST

"Breakfast is the best meal of the day." Tom Finn's family has been hearing this for decades. They assumed it was an ode to health experts or to picking up the tab for the least expensive meal. But, no, it is a nod to the U.S. Army. Though the food Tom was served at basic training in Fort Dix was nothing to write home about, he and his fellow soldiers were well fed on the front lines in Korea. He still appreciates the eggs, breakfast meats, and pancakes that the Army provided to the men fighting a critical mission to contain communism in the Korean Peninsula. This was one benefit – one mark of respect – given to troops that were giving up so much.

The Korean War began with a surprise attack June 25, 1950, when the North Korean People's Army invaded the Republic of Korea (South Korea). Concerned that the Soviet Union and Communist China encouraged this attack, President Harry S. Truman committed United States air, ground, and naval forces to the combined United Nations forces assisting the Republic of Korea in its defense.

John Thomas Finn, Jr., known as Tom, was drafted right after completing a two-year automotive program at Franklin Technical Institute. He was assigned to the 45th Infantry Division and shipped from Seattle, Washington, to Korea. His official job was taking care of vehicles in the motor pool which put his skills from Franklin to good use. He also had night guard duty and saw fighting on Pork Chop Hill and Heartbreak Ridge among other places.

Tom didn't know anyone else from the Merrimack Valley at either basic training or Korea but made friends through sports. At Johnson High, now known as North Andover High School, Tom excelled in varsity basketball, baseball, and football. In fact, Tom was inducted into the Johnson-North Andover High School Athletic Hall of Fame in 2002. He played a lot of basketball in his free time in Korea. He also had the opportunity to go to Tokyo twice,



including one Thanksgiving. There, the American soldiers were served traditional turkey dinners and encouraged to rest up before returning shortly to their base.

Tom stayed in Korea until the end of the war, July 1953. Officers at their base told the troops later one night that the Armistice Agreement would be announced the following morning. Tom remembers that night as a "last hurrah" for the North Koreans, throwing, shooting, and dropping everything they had at the Americans.

Returning to the States, Tom took

HERO: PAGE 26

Grateful for 20 Years!

Twenty years ago this month, (March 2004), the first edition of The Valley Patriot rolled off the printing presses at Graphic Development in Hanover, Massachusetts. We want to thank Bob Damon, Bill Samatis, Jay, Helen, and everyone at Graphic for providing great quality newsprint and carrying us through some very hard times, especially during Tom's long hospital stay last year, during the Columbia Gas explosions, and the two years of COVID lockdowns.

They never stopped publishing us, they never closed, and they never wavered in their support of The Valley Patriot as a small business partner.

We also want to thank Mike Gagliardi, President of the Laborer's Union Local 175 in Methuen for providing unprecedented financial support going back to the very first edition back in March of 2004.

As most of you know, we hate unions. We skewer them on a monthly basis and see them as one of the biggest problems in this country. Yet, knowing this, Mike Gagliardi (and the Laborer's Union Local 175) also understood early on that merging our diverse points of view was good journalism and exactly what newspapers are supposed to be about.

The fact is, the vast majority of newspapers today are a total failure because they refuse to fairly represent opposing views on issues important to our public discourse.

But, thanks to the relationship of The Valley Patriot and a local Labor Union in Methuen, we have held strong for twenty years in our mission of fairly telling the other side of the story and letting our readers decide who's right, and who's wrong.

We also want to thank our advertisers, especially our long-term advertisers. They have weathered boycotts, hate mail, and political retribution for supporting a newspaper that takes on powerful politicians and sacred cows other papers are afraid to expose.

Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who has helped us along the way: our sponsors, readers, delivery drivers, writers, editors, advertisers, ad designers, our 30,000 social media followers, and those of you who just pitch in from time to time to help us keep doing what we do every day.

It has been a wild 20 years.

And we wouldn't change a thing! ◊

Bike Lanes, Guardrails Infuriate Residents, Business Owners in Methuen and Dracut

Methuen and Dracut residents and business owners are up in arms over a state "road improvement" proposal that would add bike lanes, guardrails, and sidewalks to the Route 110 stretch of Lowell Street, which goes from Methuen into Dracut and Lowell.

State Representative Ryan Hamilton (D-Methuen) says that the proposal is being paid for by federal funds, but the plans are being engineered by the state, and because the funding comes from the federal government the Biden administration is requiring an entire bicycle lane with guard rails along the eastern side of Lowell Street.

"As I am sure you are aware by now, there was a 4-car accident on Rt. 110 in Dracut last week. One person was pronounced dead at the scene and eight others were injured. This unfortunately, is one example of our safety concerns," said Markos D. Zygouris of TKO Realty Management, LLC.

"Aside from all the logistical issues that this design presents, the most crucial flaw has to be their lack of attention to public safety. They took the existing roadway and added a 10' shared use lane with a 4' buffer that will include guardrail and flex posts."

"By adding this additional lane, the travel lanes will now be reduced to 11' wide each and the breakdown lane will be eliminated. It went from a wide roadway with a breakdown lane to narrower travel lanes without a breakdown lane. This will bring vehicles closer to each other when driving in opposite directions. It will create more accidents, as well as additional road rage. They believe that they will slow down the road with this new design, but they have not taken into account road rage as well as how distracted drivers already are today. In my opinion, they are being very careless and negligent by ignoring the public safety factor. In less than 5 weeks, there have already been 2 fatalities within this stretch of road."

PROJECT: PAGE 9

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The Valley Patriot is not responsible for, nor do we necessarily share the opinions of columnists and contributors that are published in the paper. Columns, by definition, are opinion pieces.

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A Flurry of Bills Passed By the Senate

Pavel Payano
STATE SENATOR, 1ST ESSEX DISTRICT

As the warmth of spring approaches, my dedicated team and I are working tirelessly to strengthen community bonds and advance key legislative initiatives.

A recent and pivotal highlight was the historic unveiling of Frederick Douglass's bust in the Massachusetts Senate, symbolizing not only our commitment to justice and equality but also serving as a powerful reminder of the importance of acknowledging our shared history and the enduring struggle for freedom.

Frederick Douglass, a towering figure in American history, was a former slave who became a prominent abolitionist, writer, and statesman. His life's work centered around advocating for the rights and liberties of all individuals, irrespective of their background.

Unveiling his bust in the Senate is not just an act of recognition; it's a homage to the enduring spirit of resilience, courage, and the relentless pursuit of justice that Douglass embodied.

This month we visited Whittier Regional Vocational Technical High School, showcasing an initiative to encourage young voter registration.

This endeavor aims to empower the next generation of leaders, emphasizing the importance of civic engagement among our youth. I admire the students' drive and commitment to shaping the future of democracy.

Joint Rule 10 Day at the State House marked a crucial legislative milestone for my team and me. The rule mandates the reporting of bills by the first Wednesday in February, signaling progress in the legislative process.

Noteworthy achievements include the passage of S2525, establishing a sick leave bank, and the favorable reports on bills such as S343: An Act establishing an education to career data center, S210: An Act expanding licensure opportunity for school counselors, S1819: An Act to advance fairness, integrity, and excellence in higher education admissions, H602: An Act to establish de-escalation training in student transportation, S1322: An Act relative to courtesy retail parking spaces designed for non-handicapped, S2058: An Act enhancing the effectiveness of nonprofits' core mission work through full cost funding, and S704: An act prohibiting discrimination against 340b drug discount program.

Furthermore, I engaged with the Methuen Active +55 Condo Community Coalition, discussing ways to enhance senior living and healthcare safety. This collaborative effort underscores my commitment to addressing the diverse needs of the community across all age groups.

I am excited to be attending The Valley Patriot's 20th Anniversary Bash as we join forces to raise funds for local school scholarships.

Supporting students in their pursuit of higher education is crucial, as it opens doors to opportunities and empowers them to build a brighter future. By contributing to these scholarships, we directly impact the educational journey of deserving students, helping them overcome financial barriers and access the transformative experience of college.

Investing in their education not only enhances individual lives but also strengthens our community by fostering a more educated and skilled workforce. I hope you can join us in making a difference and help us provide students with the chance to reach their full potential through the gift of higher education.

You can make a donation using PayPal: valleypatriot@aol.com or VenMo: @Tom-Duggan-10 or CashAp $valleypatriot or by mailing a check to The Valley Patriot BASH, 75 Main St., North Andover, MA 01845.

I also want to congratulate Tom Duggan and everyone at The Valley Patriot on the historic 20th Anniversary of this newspaper at a time when so many newspapers are going out of business. I am honored to be a part of it! ◊

Hearts, Hugs & Hope Alzheimer's Support Group at Methuen Village

March 28, 2024, 6:00 pm at Methuen Village Assisted Living and Memory Support Community, 4 Gleason Street, Methuen. Dealing with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia isn't easy, so it is helpful to share your concerns and personal experiences with others who completely understand what you're going through. You will also learn about proven strategies to help you better care for your family member. Contact Director of Compass Programming Deborah Cabral at dcabral@methuenvillage.com or 978-685-2220 for more information and to RSVP.

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I Remember how they *Laughed* ....
20 Years and 245 Editions Ago

I REMEMBER SO WELL ...

I remember when the very first edition of The Valley Patriot was delivered to my office in Lawrence City Hall back in 2004. I had never seen anything like it. It was a breath of fresh air for free speech in the Lawrence area! Tom, you and your team have come a long way since those days, you ought to be proud!

I also remember taking my share of criticism in the pages of this newspaper, but it was always fair and never personal. Mostly, I remember when you first unveiled your vision for standards in journalism, how you were laughed at and mocked by the political insiders and the newspaper industry.

CONGRATULATIONS ON GETTING THE LAST LAUGH!

Mike Sullivan

(Then) Lawrence Mayor Mike Sullivan in July of 2005 at the placement of our very first newspaper box on Mt. Vernon St. in Lawrence.

Giordano Suit Claims Salisbury Officials Labeled him a Sex Offender to Stop Board Appointment

Salisbury resident Ron Anthony Giordano has filed a lawsuit against the Town of Salisbury seeking damages for town officials labeling him a sex offender to stop his appointment to the town's planning board.

The libel/slander lawsuit was filed alleging that planning director for the Salisbury Planning Board, Lisa Pearson was so hell bent on keeping Ron Giordano off the town's planning board that she told town officials Giordano was a sex offender and was listed on the state's sex offender registry.

Giordano says that after applying to be on the board he got a phone call from Salisbury Selectman Michael Colburn asking, "are you a sex offender on the registry?"

Giordano says that Pearson told Selectman Colburn that Giordano was a sex offender and Lisa Pearson threatened to file a lawsuit against the town and selectmen personally if Giordano's application to the planning board was approved.

Pearson allegedly called other members of the board of selectmen as well, (including Takesian and Parrott), even telling Town Manager Neil Harrington. Giordano's application was subsequently rejected for those reasons.

In Giordano's court filings he seeks unspecified financial damages detailing severe anxiety and depression he and his wife have suffered since the 2022 accusation.

The filings list his fear of going out in public and that he has had to seek therapy from the false accusations and rumors in the town. He also says he has had difficulty working.

His wife is also named as a plaintiff in the suit.

Giordano's suit states that Planning Director Lisa Pearson knew he was not a sex offender and also knew he was not on the sex offender registry when she made the false and defamatory statements.

"His reputation has been damaged by L. Pearson's false statements and Salisbury's actions and or inaction. His reputation has been tarnished and he has suffered extreme emotional distress."

The filing also states that Giordano and his wife have been subjected to "hatred, contempt, and ridicule" since the accusation was made.

"Salisbury declined to appoint R. Giordano to the Planning Board based on false and defamatory statements of L. Pearson. Two unidentified Salisbury employees threatened they would file a lawsuit against Salisbury and ALL Selectmen personally if R. Giordano was appointed to the Salisbury Planning Board, Salisbury declined to do so."

The Valley Patriot was able to find a sex offender with the same name out of Salem, Massachusetts from 2013 but photos of that Ron Giordano (published in the Eagle~Tribune at the time) show a very different man than the Ron Tony Giordano of Salisbury.

Friends of the Salisbury Giordano say that he is now also pondering a run for a seat on the Board of Selectman. One friend who did not want to be named said he really hopes Giordano can clear his name and help the town in the process.

"They came after him because he's not in with the insiders and he actually wants good government. He is asking all the right questions and they hate it! The

last thing these political insiders want is someone who calls it straight. Ron Tony calls it straight. So, they went after him."

Attorney Andrew Simms of Pierce Davis and Perritano representing the Town of Salisbury claimed that the town has immunity from Lisa Pearson's slanderous comments. The Valley Patriot will follow this case and report on its progress. ◊

Protecting the Emperor with 'Poor Memory'

Kenneth Willette
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Many fairy tales provide direct life lessons of morality, honesty, ethical behavior, and examples of karma. The Emperor's New Clothes, penned by Hans Christian Andersen, is a perfect metaphor for Biden and his complacent Palace Guard. Between his court handlers, the Sunday morning press lackeys, the network and cable DNC mouthpieces, and the local party hacks, no one in Biden's World can inform the emperor that he is no longer capable of serving as POTUS.

He takes a physical, but that does not dispel the perception of 86% of Americans who believe he is too old because he refuses to participate in a cognitive test. How dare someone engage in ageism, the court criers proclaim. Mind you, this issue was never raised with historical giant Winston Churchill, who realized his mental and physical decline and resigned from office.

African Americans are suing Chicago's mayor over the illegal alien crisis. No need to wake up the emperor from his slumber because that is just isolated rumblings from the peasants. Governor Healey cuts $60,000 from disadvantaged kids in the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, and slashes Head Start funding statewide. Just the opening salvo to contain the massive fiscal bleeding due to illegals. An illegal alien monster, who was only recently released from the revolving door of a failed NY criminal justice system, then viciously murders a promising nursing student in Georgia. No direct statement from POTUS is necessary—let him have his 100th ice cream photo-op as a man of the people. Forget about a substantive, pre-Super Bowl interview on 60 Minutes. Give the emperor his softball questions and punchlines on Fallon and Kimmel Late Night instead. Be gentle with the Old-Timer!

The blue states foolishly declared themselves sanctuary havens for illegals. Now they seek a massive bailout from a federal government that just exceeded a $1.7 trillion annual deficit. Even the disastrous Biden immigration plan would not have remotely covered the full projected costs for illegals in Massachusetts, let alone the rest of the nation. Massachusetts will waste at least $2 billion (likely more) over the next two years, whereby the entire Biden relief package (currently DOA in the GOP House) only contained $1.4 billion nationwide, according to Politico. But keep circulating the false narrative.

In a supposedly full economy, post-covid, how can the emperor claim success by running up such unsustainable deficits? Not a word of dissent in Biden's universe.

At least Jimmy Carter completed the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel at this stage of his presidency. Trump effectively destroyed ISIS, maintained peaceful relations (no major wars), and ushered in the Abraham Accords. What has been the crowning accomplishment of Biden's foreign policy? Don't hold your breath guessing. The royal subjects specifically hired the emperor because of his self-proclaimed foreign policy expertise. But remember, the emperor was the sole White House voice initially in opposition to the killing of bin Laden.

How has that foolhardy hesitation served the emperor, especially with his poor memory? Shipping lanes are diverted. Evidence of massive corruption is still reported out of Ukraine, but it unfortunately now involves US taxpayer dollars. Iran is a regional puppet master of terror. North Korea launches larger missiles, with a greater range and seemingly with impunity. When Jewish voters in NY are leaning toward Trump and Arab Americans in Michigan overwhelmingly voted "uncommitted" in the recent primary, the emperor may be isolated more from the growing political maelstrom.

Don't worry, the emperor is taming inflation. Really? Don't tell that to the New Englanders who use oil heat and paid at least 10% or more this past winter. The brilliant climate change crowd is even going after natural gas, which is the cleanest fossil fuel. The climate change crowd loves to attack energy independence in our country, while Australia is shipping record levels of coal to China and India. But West Virginian coal miners are evil in the eyes of the emperor for wanting to put food on their families' tables.

My senior citizen friends in Methuen know intimately the prices at Market Basket—hint, they are not improving. And apologists wonder why stores are being closed, accusing society of blatant racism. Meanwhile, thanks to lax criminal justice laws in blue states, retail theft (industry term is shrinkage) climbed from $40 billion in 2015 to $140 billion in 2023. Who do you think ultimately pays the difference in lost sales and profits?

The court jester, Hunter, will defend the emperor (the big guy) at all costs. Doesn't matter to the palace supporters that Hunter appears to be always high as a kite or drunk as a skunk like Otis Campbell in television's Mayberry, whenever business dealings and texts/calls with daddy were involved. If that is the Radical Left's definition of plausible deniability, then our nation is doomed in November with a Biden victory. It is comical that the same fakes who peddled the Russian Collusion fairy tale are now

tripping over themselves to defend the court jester. Led by that intellectual titan, AOC.

Followers throughout the kingdom demand that we preserve democracy, as the emperor continues to circumvent a Supreme Court decision and forgive more student loans on the taxpayers' dime. The emperor has allowed approximately 7.2 million illegals to grace his beloved kingdom, with the red carpet of free hotels, free meals, free cell phones, spending cards and free transportation. Those are future voters---they need to learn the culture of dependency. The emperor loses sleep about the fate of our planet, but using Air Force One to raise millions from Hollywood's Woke community is fine.

The youngest voters, the so-called Generation Z, are starting to refute the Biden spin machine, the mounting national debt, the crowding out of limited government resources for illegals versus citizens, the shocking crimes against women and children, and the permanence of inflation (young professionals experiencing rent for the first time). They don't like the landscape. Neither should the rest of us. ◊

Auditor DiZoglio, Valley Mayors Highlight MeVa Bus Services

IN YOUR CORNER with AUDITOR DIZOGLIO

HAVERHILL – Audits are a process typically thought of as painful inconveniences to businesses and organizations. Recently, however, several Merrimack Valley mayors joined with State Auditor Diana DiZoglio (D-Methuen) to highlight the positive experience that went along with a routine audit of MeVa.

"While audits can be daunting, Auditor DiZoglio and her office understood from the start how important Regional Transit Authorities – RTAs – are to the communities we serve," said Noah Berger, executive director of MeVa. "They worked with us as a partner with the goal of serving our passengers. We are thankful to the Auditor's team for their review of our operations and are pleased to report that we have implemented all of their recommendations, which has made our service even better."

MeVa, also recognized as the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVTRA), is the public transportation agency serving 16 Merrimack Valley communities.

To bring attention to that partnership, the mayors of Amesbury, Haverhill, Lawrence, Methuen, and Newburyport – five of the sixteen communities served by MeVa – hopped on a bus along with Auditor DiZoglio, recording a social media video that brings attention to the successful audit and accessibility of services provided by MeVa.

"Organizations like MeVa are a great example of how community partners can implement recommendations from our audit findings to increase access and opportunity for all across the region," said Auditor DiZoglio. "They demonstrate that, by working together, we can accomplish more to improve the way state systems and resources perform and hold organizations accountable across state government in order to make government work better for everyone."

"Many people rely on MeVa for personal and professional travel," said Amesbury Mayor Kassandra Gove, who also serves as chair of the MeVa Advisory Board. "I'm more than happy to have a little fun on social media, especially if it helps us spread the word about this amazing resource."

The sixteen communities served by MeVa include Amesbury, Andover, Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, North Reading, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury.

"People are always surprised when I say I use MeVa to travel to my weekly dialysis appointments," explained the Methuen Mayor.

"I think those same people are just as surprised to learn that the Merrimack Valley has the gold standard of public transportation services. I hope this video helps raise awareness of the services available, and the ease of accessing them."

"Very happy and satisfied to have been invited to this project which brings us first-class information to our community," said Lawrence Mayor Brian A. DePeña. "I must say that I had a lot of fun. Let's keep up the good work!"

"Over the last couple of years, MeVa has implemented wonderful changes to improve services, making it free and more accessible," said Haverhill Mayor Melinda Barrett. "Haverhill is proud to host MeVa's administrative offices, but even more so to have them as a strong partner to the city in getting residents and our workforce where they need to go across the Merrimack Valley."

"MeVa has been a tremendous partner to Newburyport and I look forward to continue to find creative ways to engage our residents with all that MeVa offers," said Newburyport Mayor Sean Reardon.

To see the video featuring MeVa, the mayors, and Auditor DiZoglio, please visit the Office of State Auditor's pages on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, or X (formerly Twitter). It's also available on YouTube HERE. [link is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ixP76KowDo]

For more information on the audit of MeVa, as well as other state entities, please visit https://www.mass.gov/lists/all-audit-reports. ◊

The Day I Became a Republican

Kevin Dube
NORTH ANDOVER GOP COMMITTEE

I was ahead of the curve on one of the more unfortunate trends in our society today. I was the child of a single mother. My parents were married in 1968, and I was conceived shortly thereafter. Within a few months my father decided this whole family thing wasn't for him, and abandoned his pregnant wife to "go find himself." Hippie speak for going off to smoke weed and be a bum. My grandparents took us in, and for the first 10 years of my life my mother and I shared a bedroom in their home.

The welfare state was still a new thing in those days. My mother had some medical bills, which my grandfather was paying. Her doctor told her she could apply for Medicaid to pay them. At the welfare office she said she just needed help with her medical bills. However, she was informed that wasn't how it worked. There was a whole suite of benefits, including cash payments and food. There was no option, you took it all or got nothing. Additionally, a social worker would visit several times a year. I remember those visits. He would come and try to sell her on more. He could get her an apartment, and everything she needed, no work required. She always replied that it wasn't right, that she couldn't take what she didn't need and didn't work for.

She went to nursing school and became an LPN. Finally, we could get an apartment. Then the last meeting with the welfare man came. He showed up with all kinds of charts showing how she would make more money if she didn't take a full-time job as a licensed nurse and instead stayed on welfare. The part I'll never forget is that he closed by telling her she'd be a better mother if she did that. I was 10 years old. I knew what he was saying was wrong. I had helped her study for that license test, we spent hours together with me quizzing her. This was our victory, and he was telling us we'd be better off taking a government check? I didn't know it at that tender age, but that was the moment I became a Republican.

Today, some 45 years later, over half of the children born in Massachusetts are on some form of government assistance program. WIC touts on their website that they serve 53% of all children under the age of one. A like number of children, not coincidentally, are being raised by single parents. Multi-generational governmental dependency has become a sad reality in our society. By design the welfare state traps its victims into this perpetual cycle. It is not a "hand up" but rather a boot keeping the disadvantaged down.

I can only imagine where I would be today had my mother taken the welfare man's offer all those years ago. Instead, I became determined never to fall into that trap, and that my children would never have the experience I did. I went to college and got a career. Thanks to my mother's example of right and wrong, of what can truly be achieved in this land of opportunity, my children have grown up in an environment I could only envy at their age.

People like to label Republicans as cruel, heartless, or worse for wanting to get people off welfare. The reality is that Republicans believe in people and their ability to become successful if given the right tools. What is cruel and heartless is convincing people that a life of hopelessness and perpetual generational government dependency is the best they can do. All for the purpose of owning their votes in perpetuity. Want to help break the cycle? Join your local Republican committee and get involved!

Kevin Dube is the Chairman of the North Andover Republican Town Committee. He can be reached at northandovergop@gmail.com. ◊

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Moving Forward with Some Great Programs

Estela Reyes
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Before I begin, I want to congratulate Tom Duggan and everyone at The Valley Patriot on your impressive achievement of celebrating your 20th Anniversary publishing news for the Merrimack Valley. I am so excited and cannot wait to attend the 20th Anniversary Charity BASH on March 22nd at The Relief's In in Lawrence. Last year Tom and his team raised more than $54,000 in scholarship money for local students. This year we hope The Valley Patriot can beat that historic amount.

Now, February is a cold month and short month, that is often wished away by others, but to me, February offers a time to reflect on what is especially important to my community and my heritage.

Over thirty years ago I moved from the City of Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic to Lawrence, Massachusetts.

On February 27, 1844, the Dominican Republic achieved independence through the work of the resistance organization, La Trinitaria. In the Dominican Republic, many towns send representatives to the town La Vega around Independence Day to march in the parade, dressed in a variety of costumes from around the country. Carnival in the Dominican Republic is a highly anticipated event. Most Dominican towns commemorate Carnival with slight differences from within their own traditions. Through participating in festivities, honoring the fight for freedom, and spending quality time with loved ones, we are reminded of the significance of Dominican heritage and the diverse cultural identities that make up our vibrant community in Lawrence. The city of Lawrence boasts one of the highest concentrations of Dominicans in the U.S. and I am so proud to call this community my home!

Here in the U.S. February is dedicated to celebrating the achievements of Black Americans and acknowledging the central role of African American populations throughout U.S. history.

In observance of Black History Month, I would like to recognize my identifying colleagues in the Massachusetts legislature and our community leaders in Lawrence and Methuen for all of the work that they have done in our community. It is essential to uplift BIPOC individuals within the Massachusetts State Government and continue our ongoing fight for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Since 1976, every American president has designated February as Black History Month and endorsed a specific theme. This year's theme is "African Americans and the Arts," which serves to highlight the key contributions of African Americans to visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression. In our community, the Lawrence-based art and social-justice organization, Elevated Thought, supports youth and artists of color through offering art and social justice-based programming, enabling youth to produce the stories and vision that leads to individual and community change.

By providing a unique collaborative space, Elevated Thought emphasizes community engagement and understanding of creativity's liberating power. For more information about Elevated Thought's mission and programming, please visit: https://www.elevatedthought.org/our_story.

Elevated Thought is one of many important community programs in the Essex District. I want to express my gratitude for the hard work local community organizers and leaders do. Your tireless hours do not go unnoticed or unappreciated. Community programs are essential to growth, development, and connection, and it is imperative they are heard and supported by the State. I have been fortunate enough to meet with many incredible organizers who educate me about their work, why it is necessary, and what they need in order to continue operating. Please reach out to my office if you are involved in a group or organization that supports the local or regional community and want to share your expertise.

Larger programs are also central to making a change. I was proud to come together with my colleagues to vote in support of Governor Healey's bill, An Act to provide for competitiveness and infrastructure investment in Massachusetts. This piece of legislation will open up federal funding opportunities for Massachusetts to create and expand innovative, resilient infrastructure plans.

It makes Massachusetts more competitive in those funding programs and will align our infrastructure plans with the demands from a changing environment. Our state legislature showed there is a common agreement that it is time Massachusetts invests in our roads, bridges, power supplies, and more. This problem is very close to home with the Route 110 troubles we have all been experiencing. It is great to see progress as we continue to work through a long-term solution. We look forward to seeing these improvements in the coming years.

I will close this out with the news that I have secured my nomination papers for the 4th Essex District State Representative reelection. Thank you for your advocacy and support. I look forward to continuing to serve our community. ◊

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Josh Taylor Fails Truth Test in Dracut

EYE ON DRACUT

By Brian Genest
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT COLUMNIST

Dracut voters, beware. Josh Taylor, a bitter and angry second-time candidate for Selectman, is spreading lies about the town's financial situation—and officials are calling him out. Here's some irony that can't be overlooked and shouldn't be forgotten at the ballot box: As The Valley Patriot celebrates two decades of vigorously supporting and defending the First Amendment, Josh Taylor has corrupted freedom of speech and emerged as perhaps one of the most dishonest candidates for town office in 20 years.

As you may recall, Josh Taylor was an unsuccessful candidate for the Board of Selectmen in 2022, finishing fourth in a five-way race for two seats on the board. In that race, Josh Taylor finished behind Phil Thibault, the town's most defeated perennial candidate, a nine-time loser. And Josh Taylor's lackluster performance was his own fault.

Josh Taylor thought he was going to do things his way, but Dracut voters had other ideas, thankfully. Josh Taylor announced that he wasn't going to do the things a successful candidate typically would, like knock on doors, dress up in a suit, do fundraising, and all the other things voters are looking for from a serious candidate. Instead, Josh Taylor bought a street sweeper, painted it snot green, and tried to gimmick his way to electoral success. As a result, voters swept Josh Taylor aside.

After the election, Josh Taylor was serving as a member of the Beaver Brook Farm Ad-Hoc Development Subcommittee and as chairman of the Conservation Commission. He walked out of a public meeting after a disagreement with the town manager over an issue and announced he was quitting both boards on his way out the door. Is that what Dracut taxpayers can expect from Josh Taylor if he's elected to the board, someone who will quit and walk away when things get heated, when there's tough decisions to be made, or when he disagrees with someone over a town issue? Dracut deserves better from appointed and elected officials.

Speaking of which, now Josh Taylor is so desperate to get any attention at all from voters that he accused the town of financial mismanagement during an appearance on The Dracut Connect in early February. In the live broadcast, Josh Taylor told show host George Boag that the town's projected budget deficit for Fiscal Year 2025 was due to financial mismanagement, an accusation that wasn't backed up by any facts or figures, of course, because it's false.

Josh Taylor, who sits in the audience at Selectmen's meetings whenever he's running for office, went unnamed but was set straight face-to-face by town officials at their meeting later in February. During the discussion about projected town finances for the coming year, Chairman Alison Genest had Assistant Town Manager and Finance Director Victor Garofolo bring up a slide showing the cost drivers for the budget deficit.

"When you look at these line items, 60% of them are because of double inflation, plus we've got cuts from the state," she said, pointing out there is a false narrative being spread around town that misspending had led to the budget deficit. "I think the townspeople need to hear tonight that is absolutely false."

Town Manager Ann Vandal wasn't pleased, either. "I can guarantee there's no improprieties going on at town hall with respect to the budget," she said. "To me, that's the most disappointing thing I've heard since I've been employed by this community. It's just plain wrong and rude."

Selectman Joe DiRocco suggested perhaps it's time for the town to take legal action. "Maybe it's time for litigation against some of these people and maybe that's the only way this stuff stops," he said.

Perhaps Josh Taylor will rethink his talking points and his front row seat in the audience.

Anyway, speaking of financial mismanagement and poor judgment, remember Josh Taylor's street sweeper? He told George Boag that he's now bought a fleet of 16 vehicles to scale his non-traditional, non-campaign this year. If Josh Taylor is willing to spend his own money in such a frivolous manner, imagine how frivolously he'll be willing to spend our tax dollars!

In his appearance with George Boag, Josh Taylor also brought up "rumors" about his time as president of the Centralville Sportsmen's Club and his departure from that position. Back in 2022, Josh Taylor accused me, erroneously, of starting those rumors. The truth is a handful of club members personally told me Josh Taylor was accused of misusing club property, including the organization's pickup truck, and I asked questions about it on The Dracut Connection. Instead of addressing those issues himself, Josh Taylor had new club President Adam Sullivan release a pre-election statement saying he was a member in good standing and had never been removed from any club position for improprieties. In other words, Josh Taylor skirted the issue and has still never addressed it head on—and voters should wonder why. Josh Taylor told George Boag last month that he didn't really want to be president of

the club anymore and added that he lost the position to a write-in candidate.

The real story is that Josh Taylor's plan is to win a seat on the Board of Selectmen, form an alliance with Tony Archinski and Heather Santiago-Hutchings, and enact revenge on the town manager. After all, it was Heather Santiago-Hutchings who coaxed Josh Taylor into the race against her buddy Warren Shaw's chosen candidate Don Plummer. Perhaps that's the reason neither she nor Tony Archinski said one word during the discussion about the false narrative being spread by Josh Taylor.

Josh Taylor appears to have nothing positive to offer as far as the issues facing Dracut and moving our town forward. If Dracut voters wanted to elect someone who hates our town and has a beef with the town manager, they've already had 9 chances to put Phil Thibault in office and have passed over each opportunity, thankfully. Maybe Josh Taylor will learn that lesson sooner rather than later.

--Brian Genest is the producer and host of Eye On Dracut, winner of the Hometown Media Award for news, sponsored by Lucky Oil. Watch the show on DATV Channel 8 in Dracut or online anytime at DracutTV.org. ◊

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EMERGENCY PARKING BAN: Alternate Parking on Certain Streets between 12:01 AM to 6AM

The winter alternate parking ordinance shall only take effect during the dates and times specified in a "SNOW AND ICE EMERGENCY" issued by the Mayor or his/her designee, The snow emergency shall remain in effect until the Mayor rescinds it. Notice of any such rescission shall be given in the same manner as the issuance of the declaration.

Winter Alternate Parking shall mean that on the following streets, between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., daily, vehicles shall, unless otherwise prohibited by law, be parked on one side of the street only, so that on the even-numbered dates of the calendar, vehicles shall be parked on the even-numbered sides of the streets, and on the odd-numbered dates of the calendar, they shall be parked on the odd-numbered sides of the streets: ORD 10.36.031 (*IF YOUR STREET IS NOT LISTED BELOW, NO PARKING IS ALLOWED*)

Abbott St
Allen St (*General St To Angle)*
Allston St.
Ames St. *(Riverside Dr. to Haverhill St*
Amesbury St
Amherst St
Appleton St
Atkinson St
Auburn St
Bailey St
Ballard St
Barker St
Barnard St
Basswood St
Bay State Rd *(McFarlin St to Mater St)*
Beacon St
Beaconsfield St
Belknap St
Bellevue St
Bennett St
Bennington St (*Auburn St to Chestnut St)*
Beresford St
Berkeley St
Bigelow St
Blanchard St
Bodwell St
Bowdoin St
Boxford St
Bradford St
Brookfield St
Bruce St
Burke St
Burlington St
Butler St
Byron Ave
Cabot Rd
Cambridge St
Canal St
Canterbury St
Carleton St (Andover St to Everett St)
Carver St
Castle St
Cedar St
Chandler St
Chester St *(*So. Bway. To Dunstable St.)
Chestnut St
Chickering St *(Cutler St. to Pilgrim Rd.)*
Cleveland St
Clifton St
Clinton St
Colonial Dr
Colonial Rd
Colonial Terrace
Columbus Ave *(Haverhill St to Meadow St)*
Concord St
Congress St
Coolidge St
Copley St
County St
Crescent St
Crestwood Cir
Crosby St
Cross St
Cutler St (Chickering St to Marlboro St)
Cyr Drive
Dana St
Danforth St
Dartmouth St
Davis St.
Debbie Lane
Dorchester St
Dracut St (*So. Bway to Dunstable St)*
Dunstable St
Durham St
Durso Ave
East Boxford St
East Boxford Terrace
East Haverhill St
East Kingston St
East Pleasant St
East St
Easton St (*So. Bway to Jefferson St)*
Eastside St
Eaton St
Ellis St
Elm St
Emerald Ave.
Erving Ave
Eutaw St
Everett St
Exeter Pl
Exeter St
Exeter Terrace
Fairmont St
Fallon St
Falmouth St
Farley St
Farnham St
Ferry St
Ferguson St
Forest St
Foster St
Foxcroft St
Franklin St
Frost Dr
Furber St
Garden St
Garfield St (*Cambridge St to Falmouth St)*
Gilbert St
Glenn St
Glenwood Drive
Gorham St
Grafton St
Grainger St
Grant Rd
Green St
Greenfield St
Greenwood St
Groton St
Grove St
Hamlet St
Hancock St
Hawley St
High St (*Except E. Haverhill St to Ferry St)*
Highgate St
Hillside Ave
Howard St
Hudson Ave
Hurst St
Inman St
Jamaica St
Jefferson St
Juniper St. (*For its entire length on Odd Side of street (East Side only during effective period.)*
Kenneth St
Kent St
Kingston St
Laurel St
Lea St
Lebanon St *(Hampshire St to Amesbury St)*
Leeds Ter.
Lenox Circle
Lenox St
Lincoln Ct
Lisa Lane
Lorenzo Rd
Loring Street
Louisburgh St
Lowell St (Lawrence St to W. Lowell St)
Lynn St
Manchester St
Maple St
Margin St
Marie Lane
Marion Ave (except Holly St to Spicket River)
Marique Dr
Mark Lane
Market St
Marlboro St
Marston St
Martha Lane
Mason St
May St
Medford St
Melrose St
Melvin St
Middlebury St *(Olive Ave to Endicott St)*
Mill St
Milton St (*Haverhill St to Bodwell St)*
Monroe St
Morton St
Mt. Auburn St
Mt. Vernon Cir
Mt. Vernon St
Mt. Vernon Terrace
Newbury St
Newton St
No. Parish Rd
Oak St (*East Haverhill to Short St)*
Oakland Rd
Olive Ave (*W. Lowell St to Ames St)*
Orchard St
Osgood St
Oxford St
Packard St
Patton St
Pembroke Dr
Perry Ave
Philips St
Pilgrim Rd
Pleasant St (*Ferry St to High St)*
Portland St
Powers St
Proctor Rd
Prospect St
Providence St
Railroad St
Richmond St
Rita Lane
Roberta Lane
Rockwood Lane
Rowe St
Russell St
Salem St
Sanborn St
Sargent St
School St
Shattuck St
Shawsheen Rd
Sheridan St
Shepard St
Short St (Chestnut to Maple St)
So. Bowdoin St
Sparkle Drive
Springfield St
Standish Rd
Stevens St (*Mt.Vernon St to Stevens Ave)*
Storrow St
Summer St
Summit Ave
Swan St
Sylvester St
Taft St
Temple St
Tewksbury St
Thomas Rd
Tremont St
Tyler St
Valley St
Vandergrift St
Walnut St
Warren St
Water St
Weare St
West Hawley St
West Kenneth St
Westchester Drive
Westwood Terrace
White St
Whitman St
Wilmot St
Winston Dr
Winter St
Woodland St
Wyman St

ON THE FOLLOWING STREETS BETWEEN 12:01 AM AND 6:00 AM, MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, ALTERNATE PARKING WILL BE ENFORCED YEAR-ROUND: ORD 10.36.190

Ames St, from Haverhill St. to Water St.
Andover St
Arlington St, from Broadway to the Methuen Line.
Broadway, from the Methuen Line to Canal St.
Canal St, from Prospect Street to Union St.
Common St.
East Haverhill St, from Steiner St. to Avon St.
Eastside St, entire length.
Essex St.
Ferry St, from Marston St to East Haverhill St.
General Street, from Prospect Street to Union Street.
Hampshire St, from Lawrence St to Arlington St
Hampshire St, from Myrtle St to Canal St.
Hampshire St, from Canal St to Arlington St.
Haverhill St, except from Jackson St to Amesbury St and Broadway.
Jackson St, from Canal St to Kendrick St and from Berkeley Street to Methuen Line.
Lawrence St.
Lowell St, from Ames St to Lawrence St.
Market St, from Loring Street to Parker St.
Merrimack St.
Methuen St, from Broadway to Amesbury St.
Methuen St, from Lawrence St to Union St.
Parker St, from Andover St to Merrimack St
Prospect St, from the Methuen Line to Canal St.
Salem St, from Emmett St to Shawsheen Road, with the exception of that portion of Salem St., between Newton St and Everett St.)
Salem St, from Emmett St to South Union St.
South Broadway
South Union St.
Tremont St, from Hampshire St to West St.
Union St.
Water St, from Ames St to Broadway.
West St.
Winthrop Avenue, from Chickering St to Parker St.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to the portions of the following streets which are designated as State highways:

Jackson Street, north of Berkley Street to Methuen Line-Route 110.
Riverside Drive, west of Ames Street to the Methuen Line.
Winthrop Avenue, from the junction of Osgood Street south to Interstate 495.

ALL NIGHT PARKING PERMITTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

Exterior of **BREEN SCHOOL** – Yard only
CARL LINDQUIST PLAYGROUND –Emmett Street side only
CHARLES STORROW PARK –High Street side only from Pleasant Street southerly to Storrow Terrace
JAMES F. LEONARD SCHOOL PLAYGROUND –South side
ARLINGTON SCHOOL –Arlington Street
Exterior of LAHEY SCHOOL – Yard only
Exterior of ROLLINS SCHOOL – Platt Street only
PARTHUM SCHOOL – Playground area to E. Haverhill Street

It is very important that motorist cooperate and remove their vehicles out of all public areas no later than 7:00 A.M... All vehicles will be towed away at the OWNER'S EXPENSE who fails to comply with the above time schedule. Also, all vehicles immobilized by accident, mechanical, uninsured or uninspected left on all city owned land will be towed at OWNER'S EXPENSE. Any questions, call 978-620-3090 or 978-620-3350.

–Jorge Jaime, Director of DPW

(REVISED DATE 11-16-21)

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Congratulations to Tom Duggan and everyone at The Valley Patriot for not only exercising, but fighting for the 1st Amendment to the United States Constitution!

~Mike Gagliardi~

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-Mike Gagliardi,

Local 175 Laborers' Union of North America

Meet Lawrence JROTC Commander Eileen Suarez, BASH Scholarship Winner

KANE
VALLEY PATRIOT MASCOT/COLUMNIST

Kane Peaslee could not believe how energetic and motivated his new friend Commander Eileen Suarez is. Kane says," It's impressive how many purposeful tasks Eileen squeezes in each day." Every morning Kane gets up at 6:00AM but really it's just to eat, then he goes back to bed. Eileen does not go back to bed; she hits the ground running. Eileen attends drill and Color Guard practice every morning at 6:00 AM, goes to school all day, then attends JROTC programming after school. Besides classes for drill, her team competes with other JROTC programs where she serves as the Riffle Team Battalion Commander. Her team has consistently placed high in several local competitions.

Besides attending JROTC classes daily, Eileen enjoys teaching classes to the other cadets as an assistant teacher. Eileen often creates her own curriculum and works jointly with her staff on topic development and presentation. Kane thinks Eileen Suarez is going places; this young lady is on fire and always on the go.

Kane asked Commander Eileen Suarez exactly how did she know she wanted to be involved in JROTC. Eileen explained that her older brother, who is currently in the Army stationed in Kentucky, was very active in JROTC and she knew many of his friends. As his little sister he often encouraged her and included Eileen in activities with his friends. Eileen explained that JROTC is like a family. The cadets work together on projects, support each other's academic journey, and socialize in their free time. Kane was blown away to learn that the JROTC program at Lawrence High School has 300 cadets. Kane thought "wow that's a huge program" and he felt humbled to think that Eileen was the Commander of so many people. Kane noticed that Eileen is very confident for her age.

So, besides classes and drill practice in the morning, cadets under Eileen's command serve as leaders in both their local community and school community. For example, Eileen serves as a school supporter at Lawrence High School. In this position she and other cadets help with translation and provide guided tours of the school. Eileen explained to Kane with great pride that once a month her JROTC detachment helps at the Cur-Unum Meal Center in Lawrence to help with feeding the homeless. She and her fellow cadets help with the preparation

and distribution of meals. Besides these two programs Eileen also goes into the 8th grade to talk to the students about the JROTC program. Kane thought, Eileen with her amazing communication skills would be the perfect person to talk to middle school students about joining JROTC.

So exactly what is next for Commander Eileen Suarez? Well Kane thinks the sky is the limit. Eileen will be the first person in her family to attend college. To date Eileen has applied to 20 colleges. Yale University is a school that definitely has sparked Eileen's attention. Depending on the school she chooses, Eileen plans on participating in ROTC. She has applied to major in biology since the medical field calls to her. She then plans to attend medical school. Besides being appreciative of her JROTC professional staff and cadets Eileen is very appreciative of her family. She explained that her family is very close and they have served as her biggest fan and encourager.

Kane wants to remind people that there is still time to make a donation to the Lawrence High School JROTC 2024 Scholarship Fund through the Valley Patriot. Recipient Commander Eileen Suarez is truly amazing.

Woof

Kane Peaslee, Columnist

Valley Patriot ◊

"Prevailing Wage, Racist Then and Racist Now"

Lenny Mirra
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Back in 1927 U.S. Rep. Robert Bacon of New York secured funding for a new Veterans Bureau hospital on Long Island and was horrified when a contractor from Alabama won the bid and came to New York with a crew of Black construction workers.

This led to him filing bill H.R. 17069, "A Bill to Require Contractors and Subcontractors Engaged on Public Works of the United States to Comply with State Laws Relating to Hours of Labor and Wages of Employees on State Public Works" which eventually led to what is now known as prevailing wage laws. To say these laws are rooted in racism is putting it mildly, they were born of racism and though that's not the intention today the effects are stubbornly and undeniably racist.

It requires all workers on all public projects to be paid "prevailing wages" for each category of worker, even though these wages do not really prevail for most workers.

In Massachusetts it requires the driver of a two-axle truck to be paid a base wage of $35.95 per hour, plus $13.41 for health benefits, plus $14.82 for pension, for a total rate of $64.18. If he drives a three axle truck the base wage goes to $36.02, and $36.14 if he drives a four axle.

If the same guy jumps into a backhoe his base wage jumps to $50.73, plus $13.75 for health, $15.80 pension, for a total of $80.28.

Not a big deal for a large company that's been in business for a long time, their guys tend to stay in the same equipment, and they have staff experienced in complying with PW laws and submitting the "certified payrolls" required.

But consider a smaller company (and every new one is small) that doesn't have the staff required for compliance and where workers perform multiple roles. If you want to grow from a small landscaping company to one that can do public works projects these barriers to entry are too high and difficult to get over, and so rather than publicly funded jobs being an opportunity for small businesses they are instead a dead end.

Also keep in mind that a lot of new construction companies are Black and Hispanic owned and operated, something you can clearly see on private jobs where there are no PW laws. The picture is a lot different on public works jobs.

This is why there's a dearth of companies willing and able to do any kind of public work as these laws apply not only to new construction but also any kind of repairs to existing roads, bridges, buildings, etc. Thus, it's not surprising that the cost of construction in Massachusetts is cripplingly high

RACIST: PAGE 21

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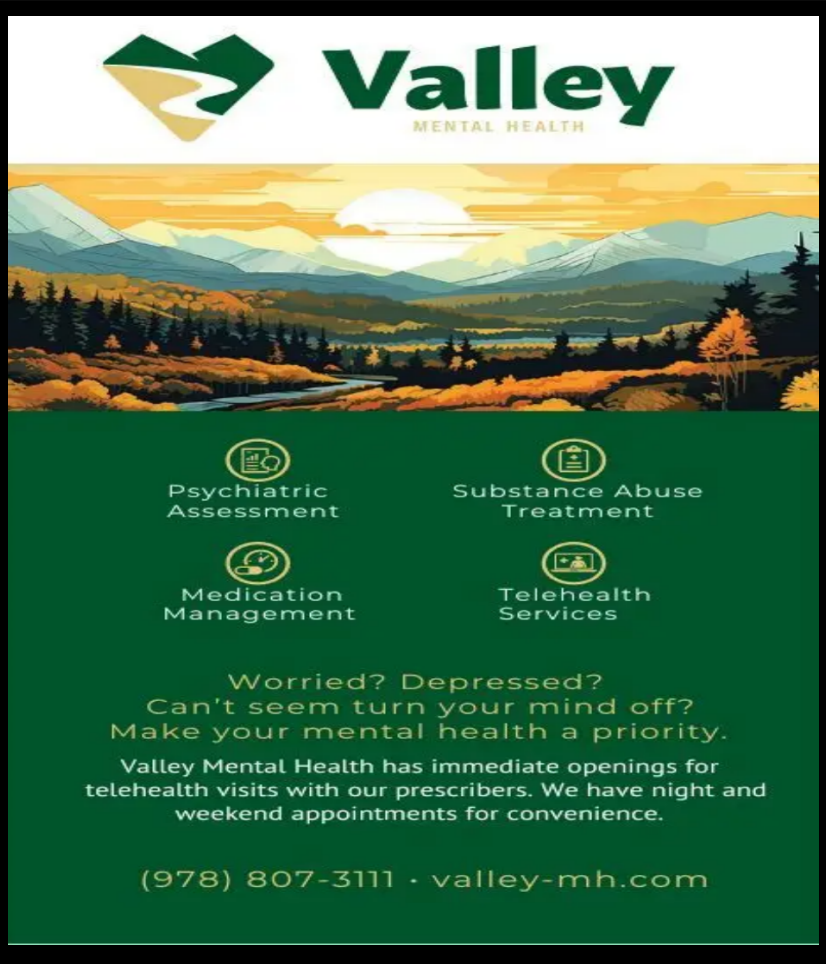

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Harrison's Roast Beef Becomes Patrick's

Once considered the best Roast Beef on the North Shore, Harrison's Roast Beef in North Andover has been purchased by Dean Chongris of Peabody who promises to restore the original recipe.

Chongris appeared on the Paying Attention! Podcast last month with Tom Duggan, revealing for the first time that Harrison's will become Patrick's and is set to open sometime this month.

First of all Harrison's will always be remembered there," Chongris said. "We wanted to bring it back to the original Harrison's recipe, so our plan is, - for starters - we've got Amanda who has 20 plus years working at Harrison. She and Emmet are going to help us maintain that Harrison's taste and feel."

"We are calling it the original Harrison's menu."

"Then we've got a Jim from the old Jim's Kabab, who is also going to come in and work with us a few days a week."

What we are trying to create is a legendary old school Lawrence Menu."

"We've got Jim Mounir," he said. "He's bringing back the old Jim's Kabob's and Mounir's menus."

"I'm excited for Dean," Mounir said.

Jim Mounir's brother and sister ran Mounir's while he ran Jim's Kabob.

"He's been working hard. I've been following how much work he's been doing. I'm looking forward to working with him. I am bringing my own recipes for tahini, hummus, the steak cheese, salad, the kibbe, all the old Mounir's recipes and Jim's Kabob's."

"So Harrison's roast beef is merging with the old Mounir's for the new Patrick's that's coming.

How does Amanda fit into this?

"I'm already excited. I was there (at Harrison's for over 21 years. I'm looking forward to bringing the place back to what it used to be and what it should be. We're going back to the original recipe for the roast beef, and then the original Mounir's recipes."

Jim Mounir said that he has always used a technique over the years of only using high-quality ingredients. "If it was something that I wouldn't eat myself, I won't serve it."

"People can say what they want but The Merrimack Valley is still considered part of the North Shore," Dean said.

"But it's not our location. It's our menu. We are looking at bringing back the local favorites, the original favorites, and ethnic favorites from north of Boston, and we are trying to incorporate a component of that at Patrick's."

"So, there's nothing more 'North-Shore' than that roast beef sandwich. If you follow the North Shore Beefs on Facebook, there's a 36,000-member cult following. They are a crazy group, but they are awesome. The sandwich means that much to these people that they follow it that hard. So, we looked at it locally and we said, 'you know what, if we put a meatball and Italian sub out there, we are selling what everybody else sells.'"

"We want to sell unique and legendary!"

So, let's remember something else that was iconic from Lawrence and that's the old chicken barb. We're going to have the old chicken barbs and we are calling it the Tally-Ho, because it's from the old Tally-Ho in Lawrence.

All of that food was a part of Lawrence. It was part of the Merrimack Valley so what we're putting together is a landmark menu. ◊

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How NH Can Combat Insurance Fraud in 2024

D.J. Bettencourt
NH LEGISLATOR

While 2023 marked several positive insurance achievements in New Hampshire, including a record recovery for consumers of $6.1 million by the New Hampshire Insurance Department, it also represented a grim milestone for insurance fraud.

Our department's Fraud Unit is tasked with investigating suspected insurance fraud and preparing founded cases for prosecution by county, state, and federal prosecutors. We normally receive approximately 300 fraud referrals a year on average. In 2023, our department saw a nearly 25% increase in fraud referrals, a record for this department.

It is critical for Granite Staters to appreciate that insurance fraud is not a victimless crime. It costs businesses billions of dollars each year, an expense that is passed on to consumers in the form of higher premiums.

According to the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud, more than $308 billion is stolen through insurance fraud each year. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimates that insurance fraud costs the average American family between $400 to $700 more in premiums every year.

Given these troubling statistics, the New Hampshire Insurance Department wants to make Granite State consumers aware of the types of insurance fraud we are encountering and what to look for to avoid it.

Insurance companies, agents/brokers, and consumers can all perpetrate insurance fraud. For example, fake or dubious insurance companies may try to entice consumers into buying fake policies by offering lower premiums than those of legitimate insurance products. Additionally, legitimate companies might try to sell non-insurance products to consumers by marketing those products as insurance.

An insurance agent or broker might perpetuate fraud on a consumer by stealing their premium payment(s) rather than passing it along to the insurance company, with the consequence that the consumer is left without coverage.

The most common forms of consumer fraud relate to auto insurance and workers' compensation. This includes a scheme known as "past-posting," where a person buys a policy after a loss has already occurred, and then filing a claim with a fake date or time to get coverage, staging losses, exaggerating a legitimate claim, contractors providing fake certificates of insurance, or knowingly providing false information on an insurance application. Each of these actions is a crime, and if discovered, those individuals responsible will be prosecuted.

So, what can Granite Staters do to prevent insurance fraud? Our colleagues at the National Association of Insurance Commissioners provide the following for consideration:

- Do not ignore warning signs. If you are suspicious, call the New Hampshire Insurance Department, and discuss your concerns. Warnings can include an insurance company or agent that does not have a phone number, is hard to contact, or is offering a product at a price that seems to be too good to be true. Another red flag is if you purchase a policy and do not receive a copy of your policy in a timely manner. Never sign a blank insurance form.
- If you have doubts, stop before signing any paperwork or paying a premium. Call the New Hampshire Insurance Department to confirm the company or agent offering the product is legitimate and licensed to sell insurance in New Hampshire. Be suspicious of door-to-door or telephone marketing, or printed solicitations without any branding.
- Look out for vehicles that pull in front of you and force you to follow close: they may be intentionally trying to cause an accident. If you are in an auto accident, get detailed information on the other parties involved in an accident including injuries and how many people are present. Take plenty of pictures of the damage to all vehicles.
- Keep your insurance information in a safe place so it does not get stolen and maintain detailed records of banking and financial transactions. Consistently monitor your financial records to ensure there is no fraudulent activity.

All of us share the responsibility to prevent insurance fraud. When fraud occurs, lives, families, businesses, and careers can be destroyed. If you are a victim of insurance fraud, or you are aware of fraudulent activity, call the New Hampshire Insurance Department (1-800-852-3416) or file a complaint online at nh.gov/insurance. Our team is prepared to work with consumers, agents/brokers, and insurance companies on these issues.

Together, we can combat Insurance fraud in 2024.

D.J. Bettencourt of Salem, NH is the Commissioner of the New Hampshire Insurance Department. ◊

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The Cost of Affordable Housing

Philippe Thibault
VALLEY PATRIOT DRACUT CONTRIBUTOR

Massachusetts House Bill 4138 goes by the moniker "the Affordable Homes Act."

This is being layered on top of the recent MBTA Communities bills passed by the legislature in 2020. The MBTA Communities, now law, requires those communities served by or adjacent to communities served by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) to provide zoning for dense residential development. For Dracut, dense residential development means fifteen units per acre and Dracut must dedicate over eighty acres to meet the target of the law.

The MBTA Communities law only requires market rate dwellings be constructed. Communities have the option to mandate that no more than ten percent is designated as affordable. The MBTA Communities law was enacted within an Economic Development Bill oddly enough and not within a housing bill. I very much dislike how most legislation is named to tug emotions. Who could be against Affordable Housing?

This bill has a far greater cost than affordable housing.

Dracut stands on the eve of a zoning overlay district to provide the capacity of one thousand two hundred new dwelling units required by the MBTA Communities law. That is, if the overlay district is approved at Town Meeting in November.

The new change being contemplated by the State House in Boston would effectively eliminate single family zoning districts not only in Dracut but statewide. The "Affordable Housing Bill," provides for Accessory Dwelling Units by right. The language provided by the bill is very generous, more generous than most communities permit for the current accessory dwelling units (sometimes referred to as In-law suites). Dracut has very stringent requirements, one of which is access to the In-law suite must be through the main dwelling. No exterior access is permitted unless a waiver is granted. I have not seen many waivers for exterior doors.

While I served on the Planning Board, an applicant for an In-law Suite was requesting a waiver for the exterior door and to eliminate the access from the main house. I inquired why they felt they were entitled to the waiver. His response was "I don't want her (his mother in-law) bothering me." I retorted, "then why are you asking her to live with you?"

The bill proposed will take away local control of a much-needed housing category, accessory dwellings, or in-law suites. Most communities utilized this type of housing to help extended families cope with the economics of medical and care issues. This housing is either for the family members or caregivers typically of a short-term period, although short term could be several years. The new bill will require that "no municipality shall unreasonably restrict the creation or rental of an accessory dwelling unit that is not a short-term rental."

Additionally, "the use of land or structures for an accessory dwelling unit …. shall not require owner occupancy of either the accessory dwelling unit or the principal dwelling." The size of the accessory dwelling unit is also very generous. Dracut's limitation is set at seven hundred square feet or ten percent of the main structure's area. The area designed to is typically seven hundred square feet as there are very few homes in Dracut that exceed seven thousand square feet. This bill would permit accessory units to be nine hundred square feet. This is comparable to a Cape style home in Dracut, three bedrooms, a bath, kitchen and living room. There is no mention of unfinished basements, but I am sure that would not count to area since most basements are not considered habitable space.

I no longer see how the State can make a claim for accessory dwelling units when the legislation provides the rental of individual dwelling units on property for the primary residence of unrelated persons. This by its definition is two family zoning.

Let us drop the euphemisms and double speak and call this zoning legislation what it is. Lowell has been having its issues with the occupancy of single-family homes that may spill over into Dracut. Private development of student housing for the University has been converting single family homes into student housing. Massachusetts State Building Code permits five unrelated persons to occupy the same dwelling and still be considered a single-family residence.

How long will it be before the main dwelling unit has five students and the accessory dwelling unit has five students? Remember the new bill does not require either dwelling to be owner occupied. A single-family lot can have ten students renting ten bedrooms and there will be ten cars in the driveway (or on the lawn if there is not sufficient driveway space).

I had a discussion with Planning Board members from neighboring communities, one who was in favor of this legislation. Although well intentioned, I do not believe he understands the far reaching and unintended consequences. While he argued that the residents can maintain their single-family homes and were not required to have accessory dwellings, he did not understand that zoning seeks to be what it is zoned. It seeks its equilibrium and communities have used zoning tools to develop and redevelop neighborhoods. The likelihood of a property being converted from a two-dwelling property to a single-family property is negligible. Once a neighborhood starts down the path of two-family occupancy, the trend will be difficult to reverse.

Clearly every community and resident are struggling with the need for affordable housing. Dracut by some estimation is deficient on affordable housing by nearly two thousand units. Those who are house poor are included in the calculation. House Bill 4138 does more harm than good to the communities by mandating the effective elimination of single-family zoning. I somehow suspect that is the secret intension by the sponsoring legislator.

This bill should be rejected if it does not permit the accessory dwelling unit as a local option. Over the past few years, we have seen a very obtrusive legislature mandating local housing zoning. How long will it be before all local zoning is mandated by the State, and what will be the ultimate cost of the community? ◊

PHOTOS: RICH RUSSELL

The Valley Patriot extends our condolences to Acting Lawrence Police Cheif William Castro and Members of the Lawrence Police Department on the untimely passing of Sgt. Charles M. Saindon.

Saindon passed away after a brief illness last month. Sergeant Saindon became a Police Officer in October of 2003, following his graduation from the Lowell Police Academy.

He was promoted to Sergeant in October of 2021.

He leaves his wife and two teenage children. Please join us as we extend our deepest condolences to his wife and children, his entire family, as well as his many friends.

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Dr. John Armano is pleased to announce the opening of Stadium Chiropractic PC located at 2 Durso Ave in Lawrence, adjacent to the Registry of Motor Vehicles behind Taco Bell. Dr. John Armano has been serving the Merrimack Valley for the past 31 years specializing in injury rehab sports medicine, as well as pain management for acute and chronic conditions. Dr. Cindy Armano has been serving Boston's North shore for the past 31 years also specializing in injury rehab, as well as family care and nutritional counseling. PHONE: (508) 350-7036. Se Habla Espanol.

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Students Deserve to be Educated in Financial Literacy

Ryan Hamilton
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Congratulations to the Valley Patriot on their 20th anniversary. I appreciate the opportunity they give me every month to inform the residents of Haverhill and Methuen about what is happening on Beacon Hill.

As we enter the month of March, I'd like to wish everyone a happy St. Patrick's Day and, hopefully, an early spring.

This month, I wanted to update you on our financial literacy bill featured in a previous Valley Patriot. Two months ago, our financial literacy bill, H4199 had a hearing of the Joint Education Committee. Considering the bill was a late file and not guaranteed a public hearing,we were delighted that it received one. We had over 40 people testify in favor of our bill, from high school students to the Massachusetts Banking Association to residents of the Commonwealth, who believe that our students deserve financial literacy. We have assembled a grassroots movement of people from all corners of the Commonwealth to pass financial literacy. The students who testified on this bill were inspiring.

Their passion for financial literacy is unmatched. They understand that it is difficult to get ahead in an ever-changing world if you do not know how to make sound financial decisions.

Unfortunately, for those students who testified, this legislation will most likely not benefit them as they will be out of high school by the time this legislation is passed and implemented. Yet they still use their voices because they want the next generation of students behind them to get a financial education. Their selflessness is simply inspiring.

The bill currently lies in the education committee, which is being re-drafted and will be ruled out favorably. Again, this is inspiring news as it moves the bill further to becoming law in Massachusetts. Part of our goal in getting this bill passed has been spreading the word through all our local media outlets and other statewide news sources. In February, I went on GBH Channel 2 with Julie Beckham from Rockland Trust and student Jimmy Merino from Chelsea! Crystal Haynes interviewed us. The YouTube link is below to watch the full 15-minute interview.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWcn9NRyKVo

I wanted to remind everyone that budget season in the State House is upon us. For any group looking for state

resources, don't hesitate to contact me or my office; we would be happy to walk through that process with you.

Lastly, I want to remind everyone that on Friday, March 22nd, the Valley Patriot is hosting its BASH to benefit local students who will receive significant scholarships to help them attend college. This year, I donated to the scholarships for a student from Haverhill High School, Whittier Tech, Greater Lawrence Tech, and Methuen High School. I would ask all those who can to donate to these scholarships. The price of college continues to rise, and the more these students receive scholarships, the less they have to take out student loans. I commend Tom and the Valley Patriot for supporting local students in the Merrimack Valley!!

As always, please don't hesitate to contact my office with any ideas, concerns, or questions at ryan.hamilton@mahouse.gov or 617-722-2090." ◊

The Boot of Government is On Your Neck!

Duncan Burns
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

"If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever." - George Orwell, 1984

Orwell's "1984" dystopian fiction was never meant to be an instruction manual, yet in 2024, here we are, fiction is now reality. Into this new year the authoritarian Uni-Party of Democrats & Republicans voted to continue the sad, long-standing practice of having secret courts, with secret judges, issuing secret warrants to spy on us, Americans. It doesn't end or begin here, but let's go through a brief Constitutional list of how wrong, and quite dystopian The United States has become.

The First Amendment: Your liberties regarding free speech, assembly, religion, petition, and a would-be free press are all but corrupted. Let's get the press out of the way first, as no matter your political ideology, our "press" are nothing but mere political propaganda outfits for their respective majority Party's. None of them should be trusted. Your speech is all but suppressed, and the worst offenders are our cowardly politicians who hate free speech. In fact, many Massachusetts politicians continue to illegally block constituents, and no one in state government cares. Yours truly was illegally blocked by our own sitting Congress Member, Rep. Lori Trahan, but at least that was reversed after the illegality was pointed out.

The Second Amendment: The Uni-Party of Congress is all for unending wars and sending teens to die in the name of campaign cash, lobbyists, and DoD PAC monies, as long as it's not their kids. Meanwhile, mostly thanks to Democrat criminal cultural enablement, teens and young minority adults slaughter each other in their inner-city hellholes. Both state & federal officials blame the guns, but it's not, it's the people using them. This leaves Massachusetts on the verge of passing some of the most unconstitutional gun laws the nation has ever seen, in the name of a lie, and we'll have to let the courts settle it. Anyone that believes "intent" can be legislated, let us know.

The Fourth Amendment: FISA is an abomination as mentioned in the opening paragraph, yet it will continue. Not sure when corporations handover your private information to the government without a warrant constitutes a violation more than awful judgement, but that's what's happening. Our entire "justice" system is now corrupted, now just an arm of whatever political ideology is the majority in office. Across the country government has been enjoying the erosion, even weaponized, to The Citizen-ry's detriment.

The Fifth & Sixth Amendments: SCOTUS pretty much got rid of Miranda v. Arizona in 2020 with Vega v. Tekoh but that's not the worst here. You could be a "J6" defendant, in prison, and still not faced with a judge or jury, "speedy trial" be damned. Worse, a "jury of your peers" no longer exists. Today's juries, as seen in countless cases, are now a jury of ideology, the rule of law be damned. We are now in an era where a jury may not even remotely reflect your peers, and your life or livelihood may be put in the hands of those who may hate you just for what you do for a living or your political ideology.

The Eight Amendment: See January 6th Defendants.

The Tenth Amendment: This is a big one, in particular because of abortion. The SCOTUS Decision to throw it back to the states was the correct call, as abortion isn't in the Constitution, sans your interpretation to "right to life." That's not stopping some Republicans to die on a hill where numerous "red states" have rejected strict pro-life legislation. If you don't like abortion, move to a state that suits your ideology. If it's not in the Constitution, it belongs to the states, end of story, but that isn't stopping Democrats from trying their just as awful authoritarianism on other states.

In the end, the evaporation of our rights and Orwell's dystopian fiction coming true comes down to one thing: Your mirror. After one of the most abysmal voter turnouts in history, this is how we got here. That's absent the banana republic status of mail-in voting, which either side can easily manipulate – We saw this corruption right here in Massachusetts! Those in power, particularly Massachusetts – the most secretive state government in the nation, will continue until/unless voters care how they are governed. In Massachusetts, even with 62% of registered voters now "unenrolled", and both Parties being simply awful with their shrinking registered voter bases, it doesn't matter. Hardly anyone is voting. The "boot" of your authoritarian government(s) will continue until you tire of those not wearing any clothes, and are forced to stop serving you the cake your apathy deserves.

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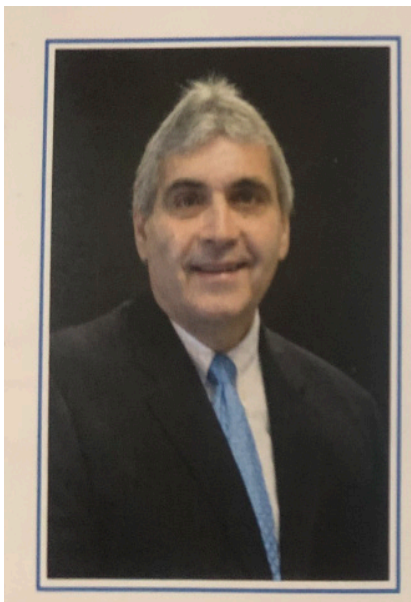

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Every year The Valley Patriot celebrates our anniversary with a Charity BASH Scholarship and Award night. This year, the Valley Patriot celebrates our 20th Anniversary at the Firefighters Relief's In, (1 Market St. in Lawrence) on Friday, March 22nd at 7pm.

You can get tickets on Eventbrite.com or by contacting The Valley Patriot.

As part of The Valley Patriot's Annual BASH, awards are given out honoring police officers, firefighters, and veteran who have been underappreciated in the community.

This year's Officer Tom Duggan Hero Police Officer Awards will be presented to Jerry Flynn, President of the New England Police Benevolent Association, and Methuen Police Officer Derek Licata.

There will be two recipients of the John Ratka Hero Veteran Award. Two recipients of the Scott Clegg Public Service Award, one recipient of the Michael R. Sweeney 1st Amendment Award, and two recipients of the Lifetime Achievement award. None of the recipients will know they have won until it is announced in the room that night.

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Valley Patriot also raises scholarship money for local students.

Each Valley Patriot scholarship was established by someone in the community for a specific school, and/or for a student going into a certain field of study.

Two years ago the BASH raised more than $34,000 in scholarship money. Last year we raised $54,000. Every penny donated for scholarships goes directly to the students or the college they are attending. We are able to do this because local businesses can sponsor the annual event to cover costs. To sponsor the event call (978) 771-4091.

To Donate to any of the scholarships you can use the following methods:

PayPal: valleypatriot@aol.com
CashAp: $valleypatriot
Venmo: Tom-Duggan-10
Mail all checks to
Valley Patriot BASH
75 Main St.
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20TH ANNIVERSARY BASH NOTEBOOK

Last month Salvatores Restaurant provided a free gourmet meal to the homeless in Lawrence by partnering up with TMF and Michael Gorman. Seen above are Valley Patriot's Tom Duggan, Methuen Councilor Nick DiZoglio, Lawrence Councilors Vivian Marmol, Stephany Infante, and Jeovanny Rodrigues, Michael Gorman, and TMF Board member Ernesto Bencosme of F.H. Cann and Associates. Back: Frank Kenneally from the YMCA.

GR. LAWRENCE TECH SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

This scholarship was started ten years ago by Methuen City Councilor Jessica Finocchiaro who was on the Gr. Lawrence Tech School Committee at the time. This is the second school to ever receive a scholarship at a Valley Patriot BASH. Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan is an alum of the tech school (Freshman and Sophomore year).

This year Jessica Finocchiaro chose Arianna Valerio.

Arianna Valerio, daughter of Danielle Sweeney, has been a student at Greater Lawrence Regional Technical High School since September, 2020.

She is studying in the Medical Assistant program and is looking to further her education in the Medical field. As a student at Greater Lawrence she has become a Certified Medical Assistant. She is also certified in CPR/First Aid and OSHA. She also was a co teacher for the freshman medical assistant class of 2026. She is currently preparing to sit for her pharmacy boards to become a certified pharmacy technician. She is currently employed as pharmacy technician at CVS Pharmacy through our cooperative education program.

Arianna has been very successful in her academic coursework at Greater Lawrence with a 4.33 GPA and is currently ranked 6th out of 409 students in the Class of 2024. Arianna has never backed away from an academic challenge and is currently enrolled in our honor level classes. Arianna is a member of the National Honor Society because of her outstanding academic achievement and community service.

Arianna has contributed to her school community as a volunteer a class officer, student volunteer for medical assisting, and as a tutor in her career area for younger students.

METHUEN HIGH – STUDIO 21 PODCAST CAFE SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship was established five years ago by Dave Garofalo, owner of Two Guys Smoke Shop and the Studio 21 Podcast Café in Salem, NH.

Dave donated $2,100 to start a scholarship for a high school senior going into media or communications in the fall. Since we did not have a scholarship for a Methuen High student on our BASH scholarship program at the time, Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan designated this scholarship for a Methuen High student.

This year Calysa Alba was chosen from the efforts of Methuen School Committeeman Ryan DiZoglio and Martha Reusch Tatro of the Methuen Public Schools.

Calysa is a member of the National Honor Society, was the president of the junior class last year, served in the Mock Trial club for two years, and ran on the outdoor track team for one year. Calysa is currently the stage manager and president of our theater club, Stage Door 22, where she previously served as front office manager and actor.

Passionate about visual arts, Calysa has spent the last two years as a photography apprentice (lead photography apprentice in 23-24) at Elevated Thought, a local social justice 501(c)(3) organization that provides space for BIPOC youth to create art and change in the community. Calysa wanted to work but rather than apply to a local coffee shop or grocery store like many of her peers, she sought out an opportunity to both get paid for doing what she loves, and also fine tune her medium to inspire change in our local community.

She represents Methuen High School in two state-wide organizations – State Student Advisory Council & Northeast Regional Student Advisory Council – where she advocates for improvements in the American education system.

She's also a member of the Methuen Youth Action Committee, a small group of student leaders that partners

NEXT PAGE

WINSTON SAYS!

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with Methuen City Council to effect change in the community. She recently advocated to our school district administration for a revision in the student handbook to specifically outline a no tolerance policy for hate speech in school.

Everything that Calysa does is aligned with who she is: a steadfast advocate whose desire to make a difference is truly for the betterment of the world around her. Calysa's extracurricular activities take up much of her free time, and yet she still manages to earn high grades with her impressive course load.

She has consistently earned A's and B's in her Honors and Advanced Placement courses throughout high school. Recently, Calysa earned the Student Outstanding Achievement Recognition award in History and Social Sciences, an award that is given to one student in the senior class in each academic discipline.

Calysa hopes to pursue a career in the journalism field, more specifically in film and photo. To that end, she has taken several art courses in both visual and performing arts throughout high school, and is currently in an intensive, year-long film seminar.

PHIL GLENDYE MEMORIAL SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOLARSHIP

This is the third year we are honoring former Lawrence High School Teacher Phil Glendye who ran the Special Olympics at the Lawrence Veterans Memorial Stadium every year and loved working with special needs students.

This scholarship goes to a special needs student either going to college, a trade school, or some form of higher education.

This year the recipient was chosen by Valley Patriot publisher Tom Duggan. The winner of this scholarship will be surprised in the room the evening of March 22nd at the Valley Patriot's 2oth Anniversary BASH at the Firefighter's Relief in, 1 Market St. in Lawrence.

EUGENE SMITH/JOHN RATKA MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Originally this was a scholarship designated for a Lawrence High School senior. It was established in 2010 by Valley Patriot Publisher Tom Duggan in cooperation with the Lawrence High Alumni Association member Chris Eldredge.

In 2018 hero veteran Eugene Smith, (a Lawrence High alum), donated $1,000 to designate this scholarship for a member of the JrROTC at Lawrence High. In 2019 our good friend and hero veteran John Ratka passed away. He was the founder of Veterans Northeast Outreach in Haverhill and was a staple at The Valley Patriot BASH.

That year his friends and family donated to this scholarship in John's via the John Ratka Scholarship Fund and asked if his name be added to this scholarship so that future veterans would remember his sacrifice to veterans.

This year's recipient is Eileen Suarez.

You can read Kane's interview with Eileen on page 13.

WHITTIER TECH SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

This scholarship was started by Whittier Tech. alum Al Veilleux for a Whittier Tech senior going into college. This is our 5th year giving out the Whittier Tech Scholarship. Haverhill School Committeeman Scott Wood and officials at Whittier help in the selection of applicants chosen for this scholarship.

This years recipient is Kauren Urena

Kauren is a highly motivated, diligent young lady who has a tremendous work ethic.

She is completing her final year in our Electrical program and has aspirations of going to college to study construction management. Kauren has shown tremendous academic growth since her freshman year, starting in lower level courses as a freshman but is currently enrolled in Honors and dual-enrollment classes earning her college credit at Northern Essex Community College.

In her shop, Kauren holds several certifications within the trade, including OSHA and HotWorks.

As a participant in our co-op program, Kauren works full time every other week at Phoenix Electrical, while still holding part-time employment at her other jobs to help support her single-parent household. Although working has been her priority, Kauren did find the time to participate in track and field during her junior year, and has also had some volunteer hours helping at a family-run daycare.

Throughout her high school years, Kauren has adopted the mantra of "don't let life pass you by" and has sought out opportunities to enrich her learning experience and plan for her future.

We are so proud of what Kauren has accomplished and are grateful for the support of Valley Patriot Scholarship to help Kauren achieve her goals of working in construction management

DAN STRANGE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

The Dan Strange Memorial Scholarship was established by Valley Patriot Publisher Tom Duggan in cooperation with Jerry Flynn of the New England Police Benevolent Association.

Dan Strange was not only an attendee at every Valley Patriot BASH, but was also a member of The Valley Patriot BASH Committee. His role on the committee was to choose police officers worthy of the Officer Tom Duggan Sr. Hero Police Officer Award.

Dan passed in August of 2020. Since

SCHOLARSHIPS: PAGE 25

Operation Greylord II

How Come Nobody investigates Corrupt Judges Anymore?

Atty. Gary Dolan
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Question: what's the difference between a lawyer and a catfish?

Answer: one is a slimy bottom feeder and the other's a fish.

The general public obviously has a dim view of the legal profession considering the whole genre of lawyer jokes about their propensity to lie, cheat and steal to make money. It's astonishing to me that when lawyers put on the black robes, the public views them as pillars of integrity. Every time I see Donald Trump in a courtroom on TV lately, someone invariably says that no one is above the law. I feel like throwing something every time I hear this because every judge in this country is above the law.

The FBI did a sting operation in the early 1980s called Operation Greylord. A rookie prosecutor in Cook County Illinois came forward with allegations that judges were fixing cases in pay to play schemes which apparently had been going on since the days of Al Capone. The sting operation resulted in over a hundred indictments and sent 83 people to prison. This number included cops, sheriffs, court clerks, lawyers and 17 judges. There would have been 19 had one not died of natural causes and another doing the taxpayers a favor by putting a gun to his head.

I was shocked to see that so much corruption could go on in one county in Illinois for so long. My first thought was how sad it was that it literally took decades for an honest lawyer (oxymoron) to come forward to do something about it. Operation Greylord only bagged the criminals who were currently in the system during the sting. Imagine, there must have been lawyers who came out of law school and spent years bribing judges and then spent years taking bribes after becoming judges themselves. I'll bet there were far more criminals who worked the system and retired before Operation Greylord than there were who got caught.

What also shocked me is that there's been no subsequent sting operations and so little corruption in the courts has been exposed since. I doubt that so much corruption could have been unique and limited to one county in Illinois. Did Operation Greylord send a clear warning to every crooked judge and lawyer across the country that fixing cases will no longer be tolerated? Or did everyone in the profession take measures to ensure their illicit schemes would be more difficult to expose?

I made allegations eight years ago that a Massachusetts Superior Court judge fixed a case for my three-opposing counsels.

I accused this judge of removing evidence of their criminal behavior from a court file and hiding it in the attic of the Newburyport Courthouse. Shortly thereafter, this judge took an early retirement (probably to save his pension) when a state rep. started looking into impeaching him on behalf of a water commissioner in Rowley.

I've never been given a hearing to present evidence of this fraud or even an opportunity to explain what happened eight years ago. Instead, the Supreme Judicial Court initiated a secret investigation against me in December of 2020. I wasn't told who initiated the investigation or what I was being accused of for more than two years. Last June I was formally charged with filing frivolous lawsuits and making false allegations against 16 judges including the SJC. I have also been ordered to pay the opposing counsel $18k for their attorney's fees.

Since I was formally charged, the BBO has blocked my efforts to get evidence to defend myself and has blocked my efforts to have any of these judges testify at my trial which begins at 10 AM on March 11th.

I will either prove these judges are crooked or be denied my due process and disbarred for just making the accusations.

They say character is what someone does when no one's watching. I say honesty is what liars do when everyone is watching. Anyone who is interested in helping me expose the corruption in these courts can log on to massbbo.org at 10 AM, March 11th, 12th, or 13th, click on the View Calendar tab and then my name.

There will be a link to a live stream and you can watch me either expose these judges or watch them take my license without due process.

Attorney Gary Dolan ◊

RACIST: FROM 13

while the diversity of workers on them is low.

This is to the detriment of all, and it came to a head recently when voters came out in droves to vote against the construction of a new Whittier Tech building. By an almost 3 to 1 margin voters defiantly voted against the project, despite lots of money and effort by unions and the contractor, Consigli, pushing for a yes vote.

So instead of building a new $444 million building, which would be partially paid for by state money, the district could be looking at repairing the existing structure, which is estimated to cost around $350 million, but with no state aid. The question nobody seems to be asking is why repairs should cost this much. The legislature needs to look into this and make it easier for companies to bid on and get public contracts, it would benefit taxpayers and minority businesses. ◊

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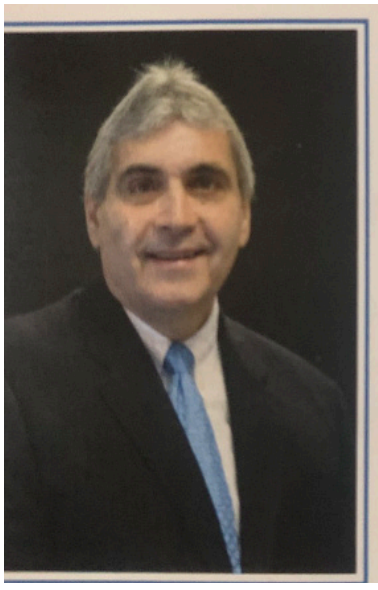

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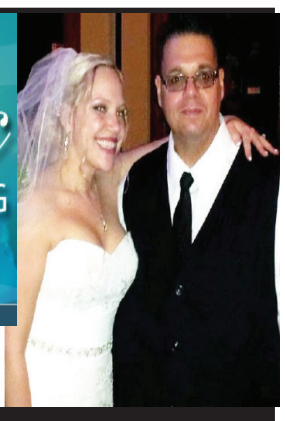

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BENEATH THE SURFACE WITH PAUL MURANO

Alabama Supreme Court Ruling and the Future of IVF

One of the more consequential rulings of the past century quietly took place in a state court recently, and it could potentially make overturning Roe v. Wade look like child's play.

The Alabama Supreme Court ruled that frozen embryos conceived by the in-vitro fertilization (IVF) process are human children – with human rights, the greatest of which is the right to life.

The ruling came on the heels of three couples suing a Mobile Alabama fertility clinic and hospital for wrongful death, after their frozen embryos had been tragically dropped and consequently killed.

A Mobile County circuit court judge in 2022 dismissed that case, opining that the Alabama law protecting unborn children does not include those living outside of the womb. Last month the state's supreme court reversed this ruling.

Alabama Supreme Court Justice Jay Mitchell wrote regarding the 8-1 ruling:

"[T]he Wrongful Death of a Minor Act is sweeping and unqualified. It applies to all children, born and unborn, without limitation. …[T]he People of this State have adopted a Constitutional amendment directly aimed at stopping courts from excluding 'unborn life' from legal protection."

This ruling may lead to two blockbuster possibilities, one short term and the other long term.

In the short term, it could spell the end of in-vitro fertilization in Alabama. In the IVF process, an average of 12-15 human embryos are created in the attempt that one survives the process until birth. These embryonic children are deliberately killed for being deemed imperfect, die after being mechanically transferred into a woman's womb, or are frozen indefinitely in a fertility clinic. Killing and freezing so many human beings is a grave attack on human dignity.

Secondly, and longer term, this ruling could eventually reach the U.S Supreme Court. If the high court ever decides to hear the case, it could do one of two things: judge narrowly the merits of the Alabama law solely for the state of Alabama; or, if a majority of the U.S. Supreme Court justices find Alabama's legal recognition of embryos as persons to be consistent with the fifth or fourteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution, then abortion, in-vitro fertilization, and most hormonal so-called contraceptives (which also act as abortifacients) would be prohibited.

This would effectively reverse the sexual revolution and the long national nightmare plaguing the American family, women and preborn children.

It may cause a civil war, as did freeing the slaves – which was the last time the nation had to be disabused of the notion that a segment of the population was "less than fully human."

Hopefully, the legal end of our culture of death would not result in more violence. Nevertheless, when the proverbial smoke clears, the logic could eventually reverse the trifold tragedy of modern times: the sexual revolution, which caused a culture of death, which led to our age of insanity. That would be a miracle of grace.

Interestingly, this could provide the perfect sequel to my recently published book "The Devil-ution of Society: from a civilization of life, to a culture of death, to an age of insanity."

Check it out at Amazon.com.

Paul Murano is producer and host of Beneath the Surface and The Murano Minute videocasts. He is author of The Devil-ution of Society (available at Amazon.com), and has taught college philosophy & theology for over 15 years. Check out his Youtube channel at Youtube.com/Veritas3737, and his website at Paulmurano.com, E-mail Paul at PJDM@aol.com.

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Dr. Pierre Ghassibi
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Property Sales, Foreclosures for Feb., 2024 in Andover, Lawrence, Methuen, North Andover. (All properties are listed in order; seller, buyer, price, address.)

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ANDOVER

Sai Builders LLC, Philip J Czarnec & Margaret Hostage, $2,250,000, 1 High Meadow Rd

84 Andover Street LLC, Andrew Ambrosino & Kristin L Anderson, $1,950,000, 60 Elm St

Faisal Ahmed & Melissa A Marrama, Daniels Estefania Ortiz Bahamonde & Justine Salvatore Quartararo, $1,770,000, 24 Powers Rd

Timothy Curley Tr & Jaime M Curley Tr & Timothy J Curley Family Revocable Trust & Jamie M Curley 2016 Revocable Trust, 116 Main LLC, $1,200,000, 116 Main St

Misun Chung Tr & SKB Revocable Trust, Shi Qi Gao & Jon Yuxuan Xia, $1,110,000, 127 North St

Kenneth J & Jane Russo, Catherine E Coutermarsh, $1,076,000, 8 Windemere Dr

Mary Beattie Tr & Roy D Umanzio Sr Tr & Mill Dale Realty Trust, Dale Street Partners LLC, $1,050,000, 19 Dale St

McCarthy Bros General Contractors Inc, Diane Abel, $999,000, 4 Livingston Cir

Daniel Chan & Alice Young, John R Tassinari & Sara L Sudbay, $890,000, 4 Green Meadow Ln

Dauntless Path LLC, Timothy Cremin & Patricia Cooney, $887,000, 24 Maple Ave

Diana K Taveras, Sarah & Andy F Mondesir, $875,000, 14-16 Fleming Ave

Shirley D'Agati Trust & Shirley J D'Agati Tr, Shirish Budree, $870,000, 22 Sunset Rock Rd

Lenore C Harubin Tr & Ordzie Family Trust, Brother Homes LLC, $730,000, 69 Sunset Rock Rd

Evergrain Orchard LLC, Colby & Audrey Blauvelt, $680,000, 302 High St

Robert D & Susan M Stocks, Victoria Caruso, $499,900, 17 Michael Way Unit 38

John P Gatto, Jay Pi Tr & DB Innovations Trust, $280,000, 7 Longwood Dr Unit 204

LAWRENCE

Z4Jordan Properties LLC, 85 -87 Summer Street LLC & Jordan Court LLC, $3,800,000, 102-114 Water St

John F Boddy Tr & William L Boddy IV Tr & William L III Tr & Boddy Realty Trust, Thirty-Five Marston Street LLC, $1,700,000, 35 Marston St

Hudson Media Inc, ZDN LLC & NDZ LLC, $1,700,000, 137 Glenn St

Luis & Maria Almanzar/Maria Almanzur, Dario & Glendy Perez, $810,000, 12-14 Royal St

Ramon Acevedo & Angelica Reyes De Acevedo, Jennifer J Flete & Ysidro Polanco, $803,000, 464-466 Hampshire St

Juan F Rozon & Diana A Morales/ Dahiana A Morales, Ronald Quiroz, $800,000, 29 Whitman St

Jae Rivas Inc, Yohon A Dominguez Almengo & Marian A Mejia, $739,900, 8 Cranshaw Pl

Albert V & Shirley A Winward, Xiomary Lora & Jelfry Baez, $707,000, 74 Berkely St

James Williams/James H Williams & Valerie Williams & Emanuel Williams & Macie Williams, Fatima Anyelina Nunez & Francisca Rondon Basora, $650,000, 318-320 South Union St

Rony Pena , Brunilda A Nunez De Varona & Cristian R Varona Basora & Cristian Y Varona Nunez, $615,000, 106 Parker St

Mario Opont & Dacheny Fidelia, Esperanza Pina Hernandez & Francisco Done Marte, $515,000, 17 Patton St

GM & E Realty LLC, Elias Saad, $510,000, 12 Bourque St

Jonathan Rennicks, L & D Family Realty LLC, $475,000, 27 Woodland Ct

Laura M Torla, 57 Salem Street LLC, $445,000, 58 Louisburg St

Irene Esponal & Irene Del Carmen Espinal Vargas, Junior A Jimenez, $380,000, 66 Sylvester St Unit 1

Joseph F Eugenio, Merrimack Valley Real Estate Solutions LLC, $369,900, 38-40 Doyle St

Pedro Perez-Jorge & Beatriz Mejia De Perez, Yaneliz Garcia Ruiz, $255,000, 272 East Haverhill St Unit 5

Jose A Reyes & Omelia Ramirez, Casdi Realty LLC, $240,000 260 East Haverhill St Unit 2.

METHUEN

Toll Ma Land III LP, Hamid & Neda A Sorornejad, $969,304, 7 Dove Ln Unit 187

Chang Shuh Tr & Youngun Shuh Tr & Shuh Revocable Trust, Juan Cepeda & Brendaliz Ortega, $945,000, 8 Pine Tree Dr

Loryn E Seabury & Loryn Nash, Chris Connolly, $780,000, 12 Sadie Ln

Lebel Investments LLC, Victor Liriano Jorge & Romenicia Arias, $739,900, 8 Collier Ave

Home Sweet Homes Solutions, Nathaniel Connors & Rebecca Admire, $725,000, 155 Woodburn Dr

Timothy R & Carolyn M Heffron, Maribel Valencia Gallego & Christian S Ormaza & Orlando Valencia, $720,000, 8 Jefferson Rd

Maura Fredette Tr & R C & E Fredette Realty Trust, Felix D Matul Lopez, $720,000, 2 Karen Way

Brian Cepeda & Brendaliz Ortega, Fernando Hernandez Guerrero & Scarlett A Morel Morillo, $660,000, 10 Temple Dr

Charles R Blatti Est & Salvatore Blatti, John Fink, $589,000, 24 Russell Farm Dr Unit 21

Meghan R Eddy, Duc Bua Tran & Nhan T Vo, $580,000, 3 Perley St

Stacey Fatalo Tr & E Mae Berreman Family Trust, Susan M Shea, $568,000, 37 Russell Farm Dr

David E & Kathleen M Kelley, Antoine Hitti, $546,000, 20 Druid Hill Ave Unit 20

Jorge Tavares & Paul Annaloro, Dennis Joseph McCann Jr & Kerri Anne McCann, $505,000, 23 Elm St

John Alses, James Franklin Urbaez & Maria Javier & Domingo Gonzalez, $500,000, 66 Ford St

Laura J Wante Tr & Leone Family Trust & Mark A Leone Tr & Anthony J Leone Tr & Leone Irrevocable Family Trust & 11 Adelaide Avenue Realty Trust & Sylvia A Leone, Yuri & Wilfredo De Leon, $485,000, 11 Adelaide Ave

Emily E & Jonathan R Linehan, Rafael Rivera & Jennifer Aponte, $480,000, 10 Pelham Ave

Plaza Home Mortgage Inc, Joseph Luis, $462,000, 15 Myrtle St

Adele M Fitzsimons Tr/ A J Fitzsimons Realty Trust, Paul James Sughrue, $440,000, 14 Emerson Ave

John W Omelia, Nicholas John & Julia Elaine Belkas, $430,000, 7 Laurel Ave

Marcie Falconero Nawi, John Palumbo, $379,900, 1 Riverview Blv Unit 3-207

Rita C Mouleart Tr/ Rita Mouleart Tr/ Rita P Mouleart Tr & Rita Mouleart Revocable Trust of 2023, Steven & Renee D'Agati, $370,000, 18 Moffett St

Kathryn E Buxton, Abreu Construction Corp Tr & Abreu Construction Realty Trust, $350,000, 59 Baremeadow St

Quyen L Diep & Henry Law, Sheila M Jewell, $340,000, 34 Burnham Rd Unit 204

Robert J Palmisano Tr & Robert J Palmisano Revocable Trust, Roberto Barcelos, $250,000, 61 Mystic St Unit 7

Robert Palmisano, Antione Fadous, $250,000, 71 Mystic St Unit 71-18

NORTH ANDOVER

Kara A Kaufman Tr & Markey Family Trust, Luis Roman & Thaina Moravia-Roman, $935,000, 233 Main St

Cherry Properties LLC, William & Jacqueline Fallon, $901,000, 20 Sylvan Ter

Richard & Kelly Lynn Peters, Jason C & Hannah M Small, $775,000, 27 Bacon Ave

Muhammad Asim Ghani Tr & Sabeen Asim Vatao Tr & MAG & SAV Revocable Trust, Michelle Lee-Bravatti, $725,000, 36 Bucklin Rd

Vincent G & Ninia A Rauscher, Shilpa Desai, $620,000, 89 Woodstock Rd

Ronald D Wiltshire Jr, Darren Phinney, $555,000, 14 Camden St

Paul J Mertens, Suneela Kulkarni Frary, $550,000, 16 Millpond

Joshua A Lewin Tr & David J Lewin Tr & Lewin Family Real Estate Trust, David Brabeck, $545,625, 17 Alcott Way Unit 17

John Keenan, Amit & Priti Shokeen, $402,500, 4 Ellis Ct Unit 4

Robert M Cohen Tr & Mary E Cohen Trust, OBS Builders LLC, $385,000, 531 Boston St

Deanna J Meinke, Adrienne B Tober, $361,000, 44 Appleton St

Wilmington Savings Fund Society FSB Tr, Rut Amritlal Patel & Guneet Gill, $330,000, 39 Farrwood Ave Unit 3

Sue Anne Guptill, Elizabeth S DeBenedetto, $296,000, 52 Ferview Ave Unit 52FV-9

Theresa D Catalano, Trisha & Daniel Lott, $265,000, 28 Fernview Ave Unit 7

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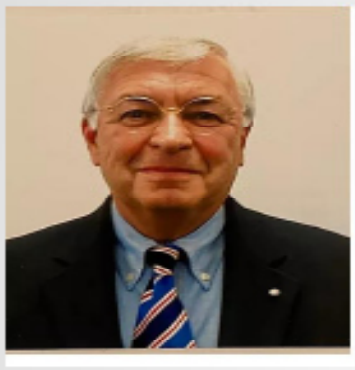

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PROJECT: FROM 2

"The guardrail is the greatest issue in this project. If the guardrail is removed from the design, then many other issues will be resolved. They have also admitted that this is the only project of its kind in the state. This tells me that they can't even be sure it's going to work as designed. We should not be their guinea pigs or test subjects!"

"This will kill business along that stretch," said Methuen Businessman David Consoli, owner of Pleasant Valley Landscaping (contractors) about the road changes.

"I don't live on that stretch but I live right near it, and that road is already a nightmare. If they narrow those two lanes of traffic to put in bike lanes that – let's face it, nobody is going to use – you are going to have more accidents and more deaths because you are making both lanes of traffic closer to each other, it's just common sense."

"There's nothing we can really do at the local level to stop the project," Representative Hamilton told The Valley Patriot.

"This has been years in the making and the state is not going to just kill a road improvement project because local people are opposing it. What we can do at the local level, however, is fight to stop the guard rails from going in. I think that's what most of the business owners and residents along that stretch are opposing. It's going to restrict access to their properties."

Dracut business owner Dennis Fearon said the widening of the sidewalks and installation of a bike path is a waste of federal dollars.

"I've owned the commercial property located at 500 Merrimack Ave, Dracut since 1972. For the past 52 years I've worked 6 days a week, frequently being outside. I can guarantee you that the bike lane will be a waste of these federal grant funds, no one walks or bikes on this roadway. Biking on 110 is equivalent to biking on Rt. 93. Is the state going to be putting a shared use lane on every highway? By installing the bike path and widening the sidewalks, they are "hoping" drivers will slow down; have they ever traveled or watched traffic patterns on this road?"

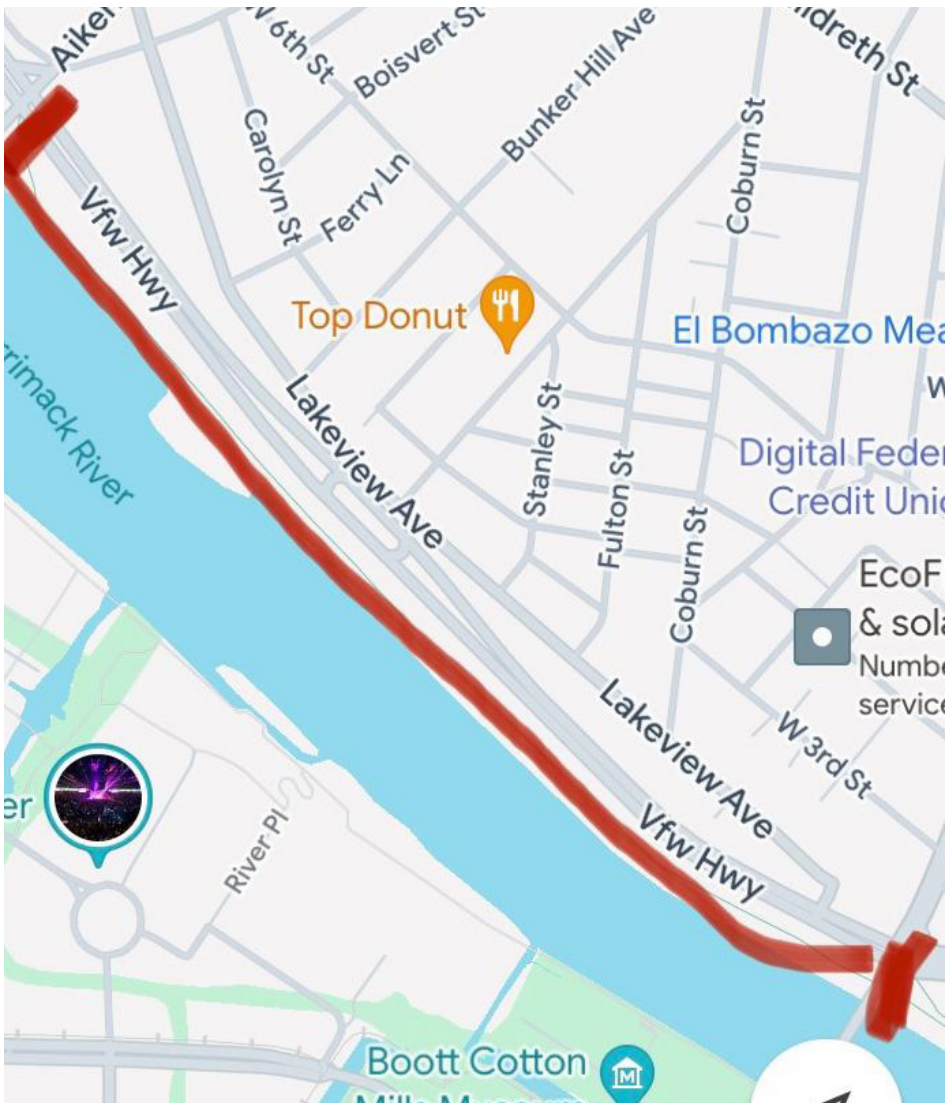
"While I understand the federal grant requires the shared use/bike lane be installed, the planned use of guardrails and flex-poles will cause multiple problems. I believe this will cause more accidents, as drivers will not have proper shoulder or breakdown lanes to pull over if necessary. If a car is pulled over by law enforcement or broken down, cars will not be able to safely go around them. Which has the potential to cause serious collisions."

"How is the mailman going to deliver the mail? The two example photos the DOT provided did not have any housing, have they ever done this type of bike lane with residential properties? This will also cause the property owners, both commercial and residential to lose usage of the minimal amount of frontage they have."

Pathik Patel owner of the Methuen Package Store at 462 Lowell St. in Methuen said his biggest concern is accessibility to his business and other businesses (Dunkin Donuts & Roast Beef) in that plaza once the guardrail is installed.

"We are located right near the traffic light and there is a lot of traffic during evening (commuting) hours. There are also two lanes where we are located so most likely one lane will be taken away for the bike path. This will make accessibility to our business harder and unsafe."

"Another issue is we have beer delivery trucks (18 wheelers) that park right on the main road (2nd lane) because they can't access our parking lot. I'm not sure where they will park once the 2nd lane goes away. Most likely they will have to block the road and create dangerous conditions for ongoing traffic."



Several of the business owners on that stretch of road contacted The Valley Patriot saying that the installation of guard rails will make it nearly impossible for their customers to access their property safely to patronize their establishments.

Businesses and residents objecting to the project on that road include TKO Realty Management, LLC - Markos Zygouris, Jay Gee's Ice Cream, Dracut's Car Connection, Heavenly Donut, Fearon's Auto (NAPA), Mario's Auto Repair and Sales, Casa Blanca Mexican Restaurant, Haus of Athletes, Jean Theberge (Resident), Maureen Graham (Resident), Yallem Cake Shop, Vedant Construction, Inc., and Peabody Supply.

State Representative Ryan Hamilton held an open meeting with abutters of the project at the Irish Cottage last month fielding an overwhelming amount of opposition to the project.

Markos D. Zygouris of TKO Realty Management, LLC listed more than 14 concerns about the project set to begin by the state Department of Transportation. The Valley Patriot will post them on-line.

State Rep. Hamilton said that the entire state delegation representing Methuen is working on helping residents and businesses along that road. ◊

SCHOLARSHIPS: From 21

then a scholarship has been given out in his name every year at the annual BASH.

This year's recipient Lizet Deferiawas chosen by Dee O'Neil of 411 Cares in cooperation with the Haverhill High School JrROTC commander.

She loves this Country!

Lizet Deferia ia a senior at Haverhill High, who is also enrolled at Northern Essex Community College and the Haverhill High School EMT program.

She has been enrolled in the Haverhill High School JrROTC program since she was a freshman; during this time she has earned awards from the American Legion, Scottish Rite, and National Sojourners, which are all nomination awards and extremely competitive awards, others include, outstanding cadet, student leadership, officer leadership, NCO leadership, civic service, distinguished scholastic awards, arts and academics, distinguished military training, physical achievement, athletic participation award, longevity and fidelity, distinguished conduct and best drill squad, to name a few. Lizet is part of the color guard, and drum and bugle corps.

She has volunteered at the MSPCA and she is a licensed CNA and has her Basic Life Support Certification and Basic and Advanced Dementia care certifications.

" SHE BELIEVES THERE IS A SOLUTION FOR EVERYTHING "

She has enlisted in the Massachusetts Army Reserves and will be attending college upon completion of basic training. She has applied to URI, FSU, Emmanuel, Penn State, Syracuse University, University of Tampa, and Rutgers University, and her acceptance letters will arrive soon.

DAN COADY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Four years ago, one of our readers, Al Veilleux donated $500 to start a scholarship in memory of Dan Coady Jr. who was killed in a tragic accident on Rt. 495 just a week before our annual BASH in 2018. Each year Al asks that we keep the Dan Coady Memorial Scholarship going for students who attended the Thomson Grammar School in North Andover where at least one of Dan Coady's children attended at the time.

This year's recipient Brigid Gaffny was chosen with the help of North Andover Superintendent Gregg Gilligan.

Brigid Gaffny, a proud sixth generation North Andover resident who attended the Thomson School from Kindergarten through fifth grade. Brigid has been chosen for the Dan Coady Memorial Scholarship at this year's Valley Patriot 20th Anniversary BASH! (March 22nd)

As a senior at North Andover High School, Brigid has excelled academically as well as athletically.

She is a member of the National Honor Society with a 3.9 grade point average and a two-sport captain on the volleyball and softball teams. As a member of the Captains Council, Brigid created partner teams to encourage school spirit, enlisted captains to make thank you cards for the custodial staff, and visited elementary schools in North Andover to share what it means to play a high school sport and be a team leader.

Volunteerism is extremely important to Brigid. She has volunteered hundreds of hours coaching young athletes in North Andover with the Booster Club program running pitching clinics and coaching with the volleyball program.

She has spearheaded food and goods donation drives for Lazarus House. Brigid provided Christmas gifts for veterans in need in the Merrimack Valley. She has organized fundraisers for breast cancer research, melanoma research, and the Sarah Strong Foundation.

This past Labor Day weekend, Brigid participated in the A Shot For Life Baseball and Softball Homerun Derby and Pitchers Challenge, participating with some of the best talent from all over the state. She won the Pitchers Challenge and the event raised $90,000 for cancer research at Massachusetts General Hospital.

On the softball field, Brigid is a two-time team captain, two-time MVP, as well as a three-time first team all MVC player. As a junior, she hit .415 with 22 RBI's and 2 homeruns. In the circle she had a 2.20 ERA , 167 strikeouts, and 14 wins including pitching an 8 inning, 5 hit, 9 strikeout win over 20-0 Wachusett in the Division 1 state tournament.

Brigid will continue her academic and athletic endeavors at Bates College next fall, where she will apply the life lessons of hard work, resilience, and courage learned from the Thomson School.

LOSING VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNINST SUE PIAZZA

We are very sad to report this month that our Book columnist Sue Piazza passed away last month. Piazza was a her veteran and an author. She is the second Valley Patriot columnist to pass away in the last six months. Valley Patriot columnist Alex Talcot was killed back in August.

HERO: FROM PAGE 1

a Pullman train across the country to Fort Meade where he was honorably discharged. He traveled home to a happy reunion with his parents, John, and Mary Finn, and two sisters, Mary, and Eleanor.

Tom joined the phone company through an on-the-job training program for veterans. He started at AT&T, working as a PBX repairman at Western Electric. During his 33 years with the phone company, he also worked as a craftsman lineman, and in numerous cities including Framingham, Boston, and Malden as well as the Merrimack Valley. He ended his career as a supervisor for New England Telephone.

Tom married Ann Hayes in 1958 and they settled in South Lawrence, raising a family that included two daughters (Patricia Driscoll and Mary Ellen Sullivan) and two sons (Tommy and Tim Finn). Education was highly valued in the family. With support from the GI Bill and the phone company, Tom attended Merrimack College nights and graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1977.

Sadly, Ann passed away from ovarian cancer in 1989 at the age of 52. Tom and Ann's legacy now includes ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren, all in the Merrimack Valley/southern NH area. While Tom's tennis-playing days at Cedardale are now fond memories, he continues his VFW membership and is an active communicant at St. Michael's Catholic Church in North Andover. Tom will celebrate his 92nd birthday this July. Tom Finn, a member of our Silent Generation, and a Hero in Our Midst.

The Haverhill, Methuen, Andover, and Dracut American Legion Posts ask all World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War Veterans, to call (603) 518-5368 and sign up for an Honor Flight to the Memorials in Washington DC! Veterans of all eras are asked to go to the American Legion's Web site www.legion.org, and join the American Legion, our mission is working with Congress, Veterans, and the Community, preserving our Veteran's Benefits for future generations and serving all Veterans and their families.

John Cuddy served in the US Navy's Construction Battalions (also known as the Seabees) after retiring from the US Navy; he earned a bachelor's in history and a master's in economics from the University of Massachusetts on the Lowell Campus. He has been employed in Logistics at FedEx for the last 26 years. If you know a World War II, Korean War, or Vietnam War Veteran who would like their story told, please email him at John.Cuddy@Yahoo.com. ◊

COLOR

TV TALK with BILL CUSHING

"The Last of Us"

Bill Cushing
VALLEY PATRIOT TV COLUMNIST

This month's recommendation is a show that's been out a whole year, but I missed writing about it when it came out. It did, however, make my year end Best List, and was very high on the list as well. A lot of people I talk to have not seen it or even heard of it, so I thought I would write about it. That show is HBO's post-apocalyptic drama 'The Last of Us.'

'The Last of Us' stars Pedro Pascal (Narcos, The Mandalorian) and Bella Ramsey (Game of Thrones) and is based on the wildly popular video game of the same name.

The series opens in 2003 Texas, where contractor and single dad Joel (Pascal), is living with his daughter Sarah (Nico Parker) and younger brother Tommy (Gabriel Luna). The outbreak of the Cordyceps brain infection – which turns humans into growling zombie-like creatures, referred to as "infected," and is later revealed to be caused by a mutant fungus entering the food supply – happens quickly. Once the outbreak happens things get bad for Joel and his family in a hurry.

After seeing Joel's life on Outbreak Day, the story then cuts to Joel 20 years later, now a man in mourning for what was lost on that day. Joel is now an older, worn-out survivor with an awful maintenance job in Boston's Quarantined Zone (QZ) and a chip on his shoulder, having never fully recovered from the events on the day of the Outbreak. Caught between the federal forces that run the QZ and the Firefly rebels that want to overthrow them, Joel plans to escape with partner Tess (Anna Torv) and locate Tommy, who's gone underground somewhere in Wyoming. The key to their departure is a car battery, something in very short supply in this world. But plans change when Joel and Tess are offered a surprising new opportunity from the Firefly leader Marlene (Merle Dandridge). They can escort a feisty 14-year-old orphan Ellie (Ramsey), who just may hold the key to a vaccine, to a western outpost in return for all the traveling supplies they need.

I don't want to give away too much more of the story, as it deserves to be watched and experienced. But 'The Last of Us' isn't only a story of an apocalypse and a teenage girl who may or may not hold the cure. It's also the story of mankind coming apart at the seams and the challenges of building a new and lasting society from the ashes. But the real story is that of a father-daughter relationship forged between a teenage girl and world-weary man who have been thrust together by their circumstances and not by their blood. Somehow that makes their bond even greater.

Pascal and Ramsey play brilliantly off each other, as we see the connection between them grow. These are great characters and performances separately, but when they're together, that's when 'The Last of Us' becomes truly memorable.

The supporting cast and stories are also terrific, including a brilliant episode starring Nick Offerman as Bill, and Murray Bartlett as Frank. This episode explores the idea of how beauty can still exist in this catastrophic world, and becomes one of the most beautiful and poignant episodes of television I've seen in a long time.

Created by the video game's director Neil Druckmann, and 'Chernobyl' writer Craig Mazin, it will be the video game adaptation that all others will be measured by. 'The Last of Us' is a truly great piece of television.

'The Last of Us' has been renewed for a second season and is available to stream on MAX.

If you have any questions about TV, you can email me at BillsTVTalk@gmail.com. I will answer all of your questions and will feature some of the questions I receive in a future Mailbag column. Follow me on Twitter and Instagram @BillsTVTalk and on Facebook at BillsTVTalk for daily up-to-the-minute TV news and discussion.◊

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Curiosity

Peter Larocque
VALLEY PATRIOT COLUMNIST

Curiosity is defined as having a strong desire to know or learn something. Through the years I have heard many times this saying, "Curiosity killed the cat." Then later a modified version with the addition of, "but satisfaction brought it back." I did some digging and here is what I found,

According to www.quora.com/ Gabriel Bell lives in the UK, atheist, liberal, Author: Fun fact, that wasn't the original phrase. The original phrase was just "curiosity killed the cat" — originating from a play by Ben Johnson in 1598 and a play by William Shakespeare in 1599, though the phrase itself was first used in that form by 1868 in a newspaper in Ireland. There is no reference to the words "and satisfaction brought it back" being attached to the phrase until the start of the last century. And,

According to www.quora.com/ Mr. John Grab Cash, a Marketing Specialist at Hewlett-Packard (company) (2022–present) Author: The phrase "curiosity killed the cat, but satisfaction brought it back" is a play on the well-known proverb "curiosity killed the cat." The original proverb is a warning against being too inquisitive or nosy, suggesting that being excessively curious about others' affairs may lead to trouble or negative consequences. The modified version adds the phrase "satisfaction brought it back," creating a twist that suggests that while curiosity might have its risks, satisfying that curiosity can bring positive outcomes or resolution. In a broader sense, it implies that curiosity, when balanced with wisdom or satisfaction, can lead to understanding or fulfillment. It's worth noting that the modified version is not as widely recognized as the original proverb, and its interpretation may vary depending on the context in which it is used.

So, being curious about the word curiosity has informed us that curiosity in and of itself is good and can lead us to greater knowledge and understanding of a person, place, or circumstance that we are curious about. But we must adhere to the warning that is implied with having curiosity, that we must not overdo it, because too much curiosity can lead us into meddling in other people's business.

The Bible calls someone who is over-excessive in being curious a busybody. We find this used in 2 Thessalonians 3:11, "For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies." NKJV. It is also used in 1 Timothy 5:13, "And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not." NKJV. In one place it is a verb and in the other, it is an adjective. The Greek word is periergaomai, periergon, peri- meaning all around, and ergon- meaning work. These two words are defined as; meddling, going beyond proper boundaries, to fixate on what others are doing, excessive, overdoing.

The Bible gives us a good example of someone being curious about Jesus and all the miracles he was hearing about involving Jesus. We can read about him in the Gospel of John 3:1-2, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." NKJV.

There are several things about this nighttime visit that I want to bring to your attention. First, Nicodemus's curiosity drove him to Jesus, but because of his position in the Jewish Community of being a Pharisee, his curiosity came with caution. So, the meeting took place under the cover of night when it was less likely that one of his fellow Pharisees would notice. Next, the first words spoken by Nicodemus were, "Rabbi, we know." Even though Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a teacher, he also quickly followed with "we know' indicating that he was not expecting Jesus to teach him anything that he did not already know. But little did Nicodemus know that the one he was speaking to was more than your typical Rabbi, He was The Messiah, the Son of God, Emmanuel! So as the conversation progressed, Jesus tells him that he must be born-again which Nicodemus should have known, especially being a man who prided himself in knowing the scriptures! I am sure he must have read, Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me." NKJV. Also, Ezekiel 11:19, "Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh," NKJV.

Nicodemus's curiosity started with an astounding conversation with Jesus and over time it had a major impact on his life because when Jesus needed him, he was there at the right time and right place which we read about in John 19:38-42, "After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. 39 And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. 40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. 42 So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby." NKJV.

It was Nicodemus's curiosity that started the ball rolling in the right direction. What are you curious about? Do you even allow yourself to be curious anymore? Is there something about Jesus that you are curious about? Go ahead and ask Him, He is listening!

Much Love!
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